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ABSTRACT

This book represents a collection of over 60 articles appearing in SKOLE: the Journal of Alternative Education from 1985 through 1992 and focusing on educational reform and alternatives to public schooling. The journal was created 9 years ago in response to the growing number of families and educators dissatisfied with public schooling and to the increasing number of educators interested in alternative approaches to public education. The book includes descriptions of alternative school programs, approaches to home schooling, and alternative curricula. One section consists of creative writing, including poetry written by students attending alternative schools. Also included are personal narratives of parents, students, and teachers involved in alternative schooling; articles explaining the philosophy and principles of educational alternatives; reviews of periodicals focusing on home schooling, educational reform, and alternative schooling; and examination of research related to alternative education. Included are addresses of authors and of schools and organizations described. Contains photographs. (LP)

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CHALLENGING

THE GIANT, VOL. II--

Other books by the author:

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CHALLENGING

THE GIANT, VOL. II--

The Best of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*,

The Journal of
Alternative Education

Down-to-Earth Books
72 Philip St.
Albany, New York 12202

CHALLENGING THE GIANT, VOL. II:

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ΣΚΟΛΕ

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of writings from the alternative education community and other sources represents a span of seven years of the little journal **ΣΚΟΛΕ**, from 1985 through 1992, picking up additional writings omitted from volume one of *Challenging the Giant*.

As with the first volume, the decision was made to put together a second volume of more of these challenging, yet broadly based articles, hoping that they will prove to be of value to non-alternative readers, coming, as they do, mainly from "inside" the alternative community. I felt that it is important to listen to the people actually "doing" alternative schooling, whether school- or home-based—not only to the educational theorists and reformers whose background may be academic or simply deeply thoughtful and concerned about the lives of children. This is in no way to discount such sources—but to *confine* one's information only to secondary sources, as most academic programs tend to do, seems to me as self-defeating as the attitude expressed in the story about a fundamentalist Baptist minister who gave a sermon denouncing the practice of going to the movies, ending his diatribe by declaring, "And thank God I have never seen one!"

There have been some changes in the concerns of families with children since the publication of volume I. In 1985, the majority of American families still took public schooling for granted as a "normal" process for the socialization and acculturation of their children. Only families who, for some statistically uncommon reason, did not find "school" rewarding—or perhaps even necessary—looked farther for answers. Neither "alternative schools" nor "homeschools" were statistically significant as options for most people. But in recent years, public awareness of the massive failure of public education to prepare our nation's children for adult life—not just the children of the underclass, "hippies" or the rich, who sent *their* children to private schools— has become common knowledge, whether or not any of the proposed solutions to that problem—such as a voucher system—are deemed acceptable to enough families to pass into laws promulgated by state legislatures.

These changes are also increasingly reflected in the appeal of **ΣΚΟΛΕ**. The perspectives and group belongings of both contributors and subscribers have gradually become increasingly varied as time has gone on, and fewer of them now come from the membership of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS) than in the early years of the journal. Perhaps this is partly because the alternative school movement has relatively few theorists in its midst, most being actively engaged in teaching, problem-solving, and working with children, with very little leisure time for formulating in print what they have been doing.

Partly, I believe this is so because alternative school people are so familiar with the kinds of information offered by the journal that it really does not hold that much interest for them. These are very good people, and they care a lot about children, as their writings indicate clearly—but it may be that they have given up hoping that anyone 'out there' is listening, and so have less motivation for writing about it than one might think! Well, the *good* news is: now they *are* beginning to listen! The *bad* news is: the *reason* they are listening is because the educational situation is becoming more and more untenable—for whatever reasons! It no longer 'works' for many—perhaps even most—kids! That is the concern behind the publication of this volume. It is to be hoped that it helps!

I have included many names and addresses of people, schools, organizations and publications dedicated to educational alternatives, and urge anyone in need to make contact with them. Most alternative schools welcome visitors, and appreciate being asked to help. This volume is intended as a reference work from which to build plans of action. Please use it well!

Mary Leue,
Editor of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL PEOPLE

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ARTHUR MORGAN SCHOOL

by Ernest Morgan

Ninety years ago, when Arthur Morgan was a young man, he had a vision of a new kind of school. The students and teachers would be living together in a working, learning Community, sharing responsibilities and decision making. The educational process would not be confined to conventional learning but would be a challenging and creative adventure in which the students would grow in confidence and self-esteem and in habits of cooperation with the teachers and with one another. It would be a happy place for students and teachers alike.

At that stage of his career Arthur Morgan could see no way of pursuing the dream but it continued vividly in his mind and became a definite goal.

By his middle thirties he had achieved success as a civil engineer and had accumulated enough resources to seriously consider the possibility of pursuing his dream school. He felt, however, that he was too lacking in formal education to tackle the job alone, and set out to find a colleague who would not only share his vision but could reinforce it with more normal education.

One of the people recommended to him was a young woman, Lucy Griscom, who had been educated in the Pestalozzi tradition and had a master's degree. Pestalozzi was an innovative Swiss educator of the Napoleonic Era, whose ideas had been close to those of Arthur Morgan, though Arthur had never heard of him. Not surprisingly Lucy Griscom found Arthur's ideas congenial. In fact, she found Arthur congenial too, and they were married.

Arthur had been married seven years before to a promising young woman who had died of typhoid fever in the second year of their marriage, leaving an infant son—me. Arthur and Lucy were married on my sixth birthday.

They set about laying plans for their future school. Arthur was still heavily occupied with his engineering practice but in their spare time they developed their ideas, and hunted for an appropriate site. Finally, in the Berkshires, they found what they wanted and purchased two abandoned farms. This land was located on the Jacob's Ladder Road, where it passed through the mountains. Looking at the boulders which were everywhere, Lucy exclaimed, "Jacob would certainly have no difficulty finding a pillow here!" (Referring to the incident in the Bible where Jacob cradles his head on a stone.) The place has been called "Jacob's Pillow" ever since.

Soon we started spending our summers there, getting ready to start the school. I recall when Lucy bought a cow and, in line with her educational philosophy, put me in charge of it at age 10. She coached me a little and I did a good job, reveling in the responsibility.

But there was a sudden and unexpected shift in our family plans. My father was called to head a huge and complicated engineering job—a flood control project for Dayton, Ohio, which would require six or seven years to complete. So ... Jacob's Pillow was put on the shelf, with plans for going ahead with it later.

Though intensely preoccupied with the engineering project, Arthur found time to bring together a group of leading citizens of Dayton, to launch a holistic school there. It was war time (World War I) and buildings were hard to come by, but one of the school's backers owned a 300 foot greenhouse which he made available. And that was where Moraine Park School was established!

It was a far cry from Arthur's dream of a rural school community, but it was just as innovative. Classes were small and informal, with active two-way communication between teachers and students. The school was like a miniature town. It had a student bank, a student court and numerous student "projects". Some were business projects, including the school lunch room. Others were social enterprises. I had two projects. I was a partner in the Moraine Furniture Repair Company, charged with fixing the folding chairs, which always seemed to be getting broken. I was also curator of the school museum, a responsibility which I enjoyed very much.

One thing we kids did at Moraine Park was to take on the janitor work of the school, the money thus saved being used to finance an excellent summer camp. We did the work willingly and enjoyed the camp immensely. Other activities included running school gardens, visiting local industries, carrying on literary clubs, holding debates and listening to interesting speakers. Moraine Park was a nifty school, on the strength of which Arthur Morgan was elected president of the Progressive Education Association.

But Moraine Park wasn't Arthur's only educational experiment of that period. He also set up experimental schools at some of the construction camps where he was building flood control dams. Thus the children of the workmen on those jobs became the lucky guinea pigs in those experiments.

In 1920, as the Dayton Flood Control Project was nearing completion, Arthur and Lucy again started looking toward Jacob's Pillow, but once more fate took a hand. Meeting my father on the street one day a friend remarked, "Arthur, I see you've been made a trustee of Antioch.

"Antioch?" said Dad, "What's that?"

It seems that Antioch College, in nearby Yellow Springs, was in the process of failing. Dad had been put on the board by the Unitarian denomination to protect their interests. (They had a claim on some of the residual assets should the college ever close.) But they neglected to tell him!

He and Lucy drove to Yellow Springs and looked the college over. It had indeed reached the end of the line. It was down to about 15 students, most of them local, and almost no faculty. The buildings were in disrepair. All hope seemed gone, and it was ready to close. At supper that night Arthur remarked to Lucy, "I think it's dead enough so that we could do what we want to with it. "

At that moment their plans shifted to the college level. Dad recruited a strong board, raised money, assembled a fine faculty and was able to draw in an excellent student body. The ideas and plans which made this possible were based on essentially the same philosophy as the dream school—but applied at the college level. Antioch was soon going strong, and Jacob's Pillow was sold to Ted Shawn, to become a school of the dance which continues to this day.

One of the reasons why Arthur and Lucy shifted their attention to the college level, Arthur told me later, was a personal one. Despite her brilliance and idealism Lucy had emotional problems. Arthur felt that as the wife of a college president she would be happier and make a greater contribution than as co-director of a rural boarding school for adolescents; I think he was right.

Time passed, and Antioch made history. Among the students who responded to Arthur Morgan's educational challenge was Elizabeth Morey. She had been home taught—reading at five, learning arithmetic at the kitchen table and exploring knowledge eagerly in various directions. Above all, she made music, playing half a dozen instruments. When she reached the appropriate age her parents entered her in Eighth Grade. She found this exciting and went on into High School where she raced through in three and a half years as an honor student. Then, after a couple of years of secretarial work, she entered Antioch, a little older than the usual freshman.

After a couple of years at Antioch her formal education was interrupted by marrying me, and we raised a family. Then, when our children were pretty well grown, she went back to college and completed the necessary requirements for teaching music in a public school. Then she took a job as music teacher in the nearby village of Clifton.

Her music teaching went well but, never having experienced elementary school, she was shocked by what she found. "If they were trying to stamp out imagination and creativity," she exclaimed, "they couldn't do it better! For what little the children learn, it's a great waste of their time. Mainly the schools seem to be a giant baby-sitting operation!"

After a couple of years the Clifton school was consolidated into a larger system and Elizabeth was offered a job there. She declined, and remarked to me that she wasn't going to teach again in a public school if she could help it. Elizabeth was highly creative, but a corollary of this creativity was her need for periodic change. Every seven years we had to have a change of scenery or of activity. It was in large part her need for change that made the launching of a new school seem so attractive. That was when we took the Jacob's Pillow idea off the shelf. But we had little money to spare, no wealthy friends and no foundation support. How could we start a school?

Arthur Morgan was a life-long apostle of the small community. Back in 1937 he had been instrumental in launching Celo Community, an experimental land trust community in the mountains of western North Carolina. In 1948 a young couple in this community had started Camp Celo, a summer camp for young children, conducted along the lines of holistic education. Our younger son attended Camp Celo and benefited greatly by it, with the result that we became involved in the camp for a time, helping it through a period of transition. This, in turn, resulted in our getting acquainted with Celo Community. The community, in turn, took an interest in our projected school and, for a dollar a year, leased us fifty acres of land, with a few rudimentary buildings.

Thus encouraged, we projected a school to be opened after four years. In the meantime we planned summer work camps for kids of junior high age, to get the place ready.

But we had another, and secret, motive for carrying on this work camp. A.S. Neill, in his book *Summerhill,* had said that he had never known kids to work "without being driven to it." We were projecting a working school, and wanted to find out for ourselves if kids could be persuaded to work willingly. We needn't have worried. Working in the morning and playing in the afternoons, our campers ate it up!

Another problem was that we wouldn't be able to get tax deduction until the school was actually open. Happily this problem was solved. Celo Community had a Health Center, also instigated by Arthur Morgan, in which the doctor made a special practice of instructing his patients in taking greater responsibility for their own health. That was one of my father's ideas and the non-profit organization which governed the Health Center was named The Celo Health Education Corporation.

We asked the board of the CHEC, as it was called, if they would take our school as one of their projects—if we didn't ask them for money! They agreed, thereby giving us not only tax shelter but a capable and sympathetic board. It was a member of that board who suggested the name, The Arthur Morgan School. That name, he said, would convey an idea of the philosophy of the school and would provide a symbol around which to rally support. Sure enough, it did!

The Arthur Morgan School opened in 1962, with Elizabeth Morgan as Director. (I still had to spend most of my time in Yellow Springs.) We had chosen the junior high age group, grades 7, 8 and 9, for two reasons. First, that age group is about the youngest that can be expected to go away to school. Second, it is about the oldest group in which basic habits and values can readily be altered. Besides, the academic demands of Grades 10, 11 and 12, being geared to college prep, require a more demanding level of equipment and sophistication. We were influenced too by the thought that the junior high level is probably the most neglected—and perhaps the most difficult— in modern education. Anyhow, that was the level we chose.

It was an uphill struggle. Coming mainly from public schools the kids tended to be docile and lacking in self-esteem. At the same time they were competitive and self-centered. Elizabeth and her staff worked hard to change this, and with time made progress. I recall a striking incident. AMS, as we call it, had a fine folk dance team, which took part in the annual competition in the Southern Youth Jamboree, in Asheville. For two years our team won first place in its class. The third year Elizabeth forbade them to compete. "Dancing is for joy!" she said, "Not to beat somebody." She had seen kids leaving the Jamboree crying because their teams had lost.

Happily, our group was accepted as an "exhibition team." In their performance they were relaxed and smiling happily at each other, dancing beautifully. They were in sharp contrast to the other teams, who danced grimly, as though their lives depended on it.

Tucked away in a mountain wilderness, MAS seems remote from the issues of the world. But is it?

For three weeks every February the entire school embarks on field trips. One group may visit a refugee camp in Texas, another may take a canoe trip in the Everglades or a bike trip through Georgia. Another may join a civic project in Washington or Philadelphia. The trips are never two years the same, but every one involves service work of some sort.

Returning home there is general rejoicing as the school is reunited, followed by much exchanging of experiences.

A recent special trip in which almost the whole school took part was an expedition to Oak Ridge, Tennessee to witness the trial of three women who had engaged in civil disobedience against the manufacture of nuclear weapons. All sides were heard and the students were intensely interested. Ironically, the MAS delegation received more (and favorable) news coverage than did the trial itself.

Work and decision-making are actively shared at AMS. Once, at All-school Meeting, one of the students was feeling out just how far student decision-making might reach. "Could we decide to abolish classes?" He asked.

"Let's talk about it." Elizabeth said. "What do you think?" There was some lively discussion and the students quickly reached consensus that classes were important.

On another occasion the woman in charge of the kitchen complained at All-school Meeting that someone had jabbed a screwdriver through the lid of a jar of peanut butter, and left it there. The Meeting discussed this and the English teacher suggested that his class write papers on why someone would jab a screwdriver into a jar of peanut butter.

At the next All-school Meeting the papers were read. Some would have done credit to a psychologist. Others would not. Discussion followed and morning classes were canceled so that it might continue. This proved to be a remarkable educational experience.

At the end a question was raised as to whether the pantry door should be locked. It was quickly agreed that after this discussion it wouldn't be necessary.

An equally dramatic episode occurred in connection with seating in the lunchroom. Noise in the lunchroom was a perennial problem and at one point the staff decided to have assigned seating. The students didn't like this, and at the next All-school Meeting a motion was made (though they usually decided by consensus) to abolish assigned seating. All the students voted for it, all the staff against it. There were more students than staff.

I was sitting in on that meeting as a spectator and wondered how the staff was going to cope. Would they bow to the students, or would they declare a dictatorship? At this point one of the staff spoke up. "Now that we've passed that motion," he said, "it brings us back to the problem which assigned seating was intended to solve—the matter of noise in the dining room. I suggest that we adopt a policy—not a rigid rule, but a policy—that when we sit down in the dining room at least one place shall be left at each table for a staff member, so he or she can quiet the table if it gets too noisy." This suggestion was readily adopted by consensus—a win-win solution.

AMS didn't—and still doesn't—give grades to its students. Instead each staff member writes periodic "evaluations" of the class work and other activities of the students with whom he or she is closely associated.

Before being sent to the parents these evaluations are shown to the individual students, who are invited to Make any comments they feel to be in order. In general the evaluations are better than the students expected, and this brightens their lives.

Now and then the contrary is the case. I remember Elizabeth delaying sending an evaluation to the parents, to give the student time to improve the report.

Most schools to which the students transfer appreciate evaluations. A few require grades, in which cases AMS does translate the evaluations into letter grades.

What is handled as "discipline" in most schools assumes some interesting variations at AMS.

When a couple of students become embroiled in a quarrel, as sometimes happens, a "clearness committee" is invoked. This generally consists of the staff advisors of the two students, and the students themselves. A quiet session of thoughtful communication often eases the conflict.

When an individual behaviour problem is involved it is often effective to have the student select a "support group" of friends who will use their influence to help keep the problem student in line. Such a group commonly consists of two staff members and two students. The efforts of the group members assume the quality of help rather than authoritarian discipline.

The 9th Graders are the "Seniors" at AMS, and they tend to set the tone for the student body. In general the school prefers to raise its own 9th Graders though sometimes outstanding young people enter as 9th Graders and make a real contribution.

Sometimes when a student finishes 8th Grade without having achieved a positive, outgoing attitude, he or she is not considered as being ready for the status of "Senior", and is asked to find another school. "You aren't quite ready to be a Senior yet. You will do better to attend a school where you will be a Freshman."

Sometimes an 8th Grader of dubious desirability, urgently wishing to return, puts forth special effort to make the required improvement.

One thing we have learned at AMS is that apparent failures are not always final.

I recall a student in Elizabeth's era, an attractive, intelligent girl, who seemed totally bland and submissive — no starch at all. Elizabeth worried about her and tried to wake her up, particularly through music teaching. Finally, sure enough, the girl showed signs of life, becoming rebellious and downright hostile. After leaving AMS she even persuaded a desirable prospective student not to come.

Years passed, and an article by this young woman appeared in a national magazine, telling about a wonderful school in North Carolina which she had attended, and how she wished she might be on its staff some day. Later she married, and had a family, naming her first child Morgan.

One non-final failure at AMS involved a boy who tended to be violent. Elizabeth was afraid he might injure some of the other boys, and invited him not to return for a second year.

One day, many years later, a pick-up truck drove in, and a radiant young man got out, along with his wife and little daughter. He was that same boy! In the course of his visit he remarked, "But for AMS I think I would have been a "delinquent."

After seven successful years directing AMS Elizabeth resigned. "Oh no, Elizabeth! No one but you can do it!" said the board, and insisted that she continue. She yielded to their urging and did so, but the eighth year was traumatic, and she developed cancer and almost died. Her place was taken by a young man from the staff, who did very well. As she recovered from her illness she stayed away from the school to avoid cramping him—but he drew her back into activity, as music teacher and librarian, and found her very supportive.

Elizabeth enjoyed her new role and contributed generously to the life of the school. However, the cancer returned, and she died a year later, in 1971, but the direction of the school had been well established, and carried on through the years, always changing but always with the same central thrust. It is curious to note that of the three directors—excellent men—

who were brought in from outside, all were failures. One didn't even last out the year. However, all the directors who were recruited from within were successful. Apparently there is an organizational culture at AMS that has to be experienced before it can be led.

Later the school abolished the post of Director, and is now "staff run." Instead of a director it has a "clerk" or "co-clerks", after the manner of Friends. It still has a board which shares in its governance, albeit usually in an advisory capacity.

One part of Arthur Morgan's educational dream didn't work out very well. He envisioned the school as having small businesses which would make it at least partly self-supporting.

In the early years of the new Antioch he attempted that. There were the Antioch Press, the Antioch Foundry and the Antioch Shoe project. One, the Antioch Press, survived for over 25 years, but in the end they all went out of business or transferred to private management. However, the *idea* of starting small businesses did take root and Antioch gave rise to several flourishing local industries in the hands of Antioch alumni, which contribute generously to the college.

We tried the same idea at AMS. First was Celo Press, a printing and publishing company, which put out a book I had written. That book, *A Manual of Simple Burial,* grew through twelve editions into a substantial volume, *Dealing Creatively With Death*, with strong sales. But the people in charge of the project tried to develop the Press into a regular publishing business, and lost money in the process, whereupon the endowment committee decided to close it out. Happily, the publishing of my book was taken over by an AMS alumnus from 20 years ago who now has a publishing business of his own.

A more unusual business taken on by AMS was Celo Laboratories, a firm started by a Celo Community member to merchandise standard pharmaceutical products of good quality under their generic names at prices substantially below the identical products under brand names. It was a valuable service, and when the man left Celo he gave the mail order part of the business to AMS. Another community member, who knew the business and was a friend of the school, agreed to manage it for us.

This led to a remarkable incident. A 9th Grade girl from AMS, as her work project, went each day to the Celo Labs office to help with the work. Suddenly the man died of a heart attack. None of the AMS staff knew the business—but the 9th Grade girl did! Accordingly it fell to her lot to train in a new manager. The effect on the girl was amazing. Almost overnight she emerged from a timid, unsure child into a confident, poised young woman! We wished that the man who had died might have seen that transformation.

Later a direct mail co-op entered the field with the same line of generic pharmaceuticals—and at even lower prices. We saw the handwriting on the wall—or so we thought—and felt that our little business was no longer needed. So we turned our business over to the co-op. That was a mistake. A year or so later the co-op went out of business. We should have hung on.

Despite the poor results with school-owned businesses at Antioch and AMS I still think there are possibilities in that direction—possibly some sort of a partnership arrangement between the institution and the management of the business. There is an organization called "Education with Production" devoted to the idea of businesses in educational institutions. I heartily wish them well.

Not surprisingly, we have been told by Montessori people that the Arthur Morgan School is the closest thing they have found to the *"Erdkinder"* projected by Madame Montessori. That is high praise.

The finest testimony to the school which I remember was the remark of a girl who had spent three years at AMS and had then gone on to a regular high school. She had dropped by for a visit.

"How did you find the transition?" I asked.

"Very difficult," she said.

"In what particular subjects?"

"Academics?" she said, "No problem. The difficult part was going from a place where people cared about each other to a place where nobody cared about anyone but himself." Just the same, she had been successful in developing a circle of friends.

A different kind of testimony was experienced in 1988, on the occasion of the celebration of the school's 25th anniversary. Forty per cent of all the students who had ever come to AMS showed up, coming from all over the country and with all the classes represented, as well as a large number of former staff members. A remarkable turnout for a junior high school with a national clientele.

Now in its 29th year, AMS still carries the banner of holistic education raised by Arthur Morgan nearly a century ago.

We are grateful to Ernest Morgan for permission to publish his splendid article on Arthur Morgan School and on the remarkable lives of his gifted family! The school may be contacted at 1901 Hannah Branch Road, Burnsville, NC 28714.

INSIDE SHAKER MOUNTAIN SCHOOL: DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

by Jerry Mintz

Governance of schools is becoming an increasingly important issue, as educators begin to realize how crucial it is to empower the participants in any educational process.

There are currently many hundreds of schools in the United States and other countries, both private and public, which operate with varying degrees of student self-government. These take a variety of forms, including democratic vote by students and teachers, a majority vote, or consensus by students and teachers.

For the purposes of this discussion I am not including representative governments or student councils because, for the most part, they are nothing more than a sham and have very little decision making power. It is our contention that the more that the student learner can be empowered, involved in making decisions about his or her education, the more powerful that force can be toward helping them to take true responsibility for their own education. I feel that it is possible to set up such a decision-making process almost anywhere, and that all participants should have safeguards in that process.

In a true democratic process, decisions are made using all the creative forces and all the authority of the many participants who are involved in making those decisions. To the extent that they are disempowered by special groups having veto power, to that extent is the authority and the creative power of the total body eroded.

When we founded Shaker Mountain school, in 1968, it was set up as a democratic school, with the encouragement of the then-Commissioner of Education of the state, Harvey Scribner. Students were even the majority of our board of trustees. We did this because Scribner had said we needed to have the people we could trust the most on our board of trustees (rather than those who could raise the most money), to make decisions that would be best for the school. We felt that the ones we could trust the most would be the students, themselves. Throughout the years, all important decisions were made by the school meeting, with all students participating. When particular items were brought to the board of trustees, invariably the student trustees, the majority, would refer these decisions back to the school meeting, feeling that it was the proper forum for making any decision.

Those decisions even included such major issues as buying and selling buildings, the organization of major funding events, and all basic school policies. I feel that the procedures which were developed for the school meeting at Shaker Mountain, created the most effective school self government that I've ever seen, having visited several hundred alternative schools, including Summerhill, in England, which was the pioneer in this process.

In the earliest years, decisions were made by a straight majority. Our meetings were always long and sometimes emotional because the real decisions operating the school were made in the meeting. It always seems to me that schools that reserve their meeting time for "Wednesday afternoon for one hour" couldn't really be democratic because there are so many more decisions to be made during the week. We often had meetings that lasted the entire Monday morning and Friday morning, sometimes spilling over into the afternoons. In addition, we had meetings for class announcements every morning during the week, which often had other decisions brought into them. Special meetings could be called by any staff or student by ringing the meeting bell. I feel that this latter feature was very important because it wasn't necessary for someone to get permission to call a meeting or for a particular person to go around the school rounding up people for a meeting. If the meeting bell rang, there was a meeting, and the meeting bell was considered rather sacred around the school. In fact, if anyone ever rang the meeting bell when there wasn't a meeting, there was an automatic meeting on that person "for calling a meeting when there wasn't one." But this probably didn't happen more than a handful of times in 17 years.

In the following sections, I will outline the decisions governing the meeting as they evolved at Shaker Mountain School, however, I think it is important to point out that the meeting system is really more of an art than a science, and like all democracies, it is fragile and depends very much upon the respect it is given by the constituents. If at some point people begin to feel that they are not really the ones making the decisions, attendance and participation and creative energy fall off, not unlike the apathy manifested recently in national elections. On the other hand when people feel that they have important decisions to make, attendance is high.

One obvious implication of the last statement is that attendance at the meetings was not compulsory. Neither was attendance at all classes in the school. However, if a group of people at a regular school meeting felt that a particular issue was of such importance that everybody in the school needed to know about it and its consequences, somebody could propose that there be a 'super-meeting.' If it was passed, that meeting become a 'super-meeting.' It would be necessary for all people around the school to come to the meeting until it was voted that it did not need to be a 'super meeting' any more. This probably didn't happen any more than 10% of the time.

One interesting by-product of the school meetings was that the rate of increase in vocabulary on the part of the average student in school was 2 1/2 times the national rate. We actually had students increase 6 grade levels in a year in their vocabulary, even when they were otherwise not attending classes. We can only assume that this was a consequence of the student's participating in and listening to the meetings, and determining that they wanted to understand everything that was being said in them.

Two of the most common approaches to self-government are democratic decision making by the majority and decision by consensus of the group. Shaker Mountain school evolved an interesting blending of the advantages of both these approaches, being heavily influenced in the early years by their involvement with the traditionalist Mohawk Indians of the Iroquois Confederacy (We had regular exchange visits with them). This is perhaps quite fitting because it was the influence of the Iroquois confederacy that convinced Benjamin Franklin, among others, that democratic decision making was a good form of government and, therefore, a good one to be used for the fledgling independent colonies. In our early contacts with the Mohawks we discovered that they made their decisions at a council by having each member express their opinion. If a minority opinion was indicated they would then listen very carefully to that minority opinion, and allow it to be fully expressed, perhaps then changing the decision of the whole group. But ultimately, if they felt that the minority opinion was fully explored and that there were no options offered, the decision of the majority became the decision of the tribes.

An approach somewhat similar to this is used in consensus decision making, in which a person or persons may wish to 'stand aside.' They may disagree with the decision, but are willing to let the decision of the rest of the members stand. As it was described to me by Eric Joy, a teacher at the Arthur Morgan School, a Quaker School in Burnsville, N.C., consensus to him means 'sense of the meeting.' The clerk of the meeting will try to determine what this sense of the meeting is. If a person offers a dissenting opinion, they are given a chance to express what that opinion is, and then given some time to come up with an alternative proposal. But if they are not able to come up with an alternative proposal, it is incumbent upon the clerk to determine what the sense of the meeting is, and proceed on to make decisions based on that sense.

At Shaker Mountain, decisions were technically based on majority vote. However, it became customary at our meetings for the chairperson to ask people who had voted negatively to say why they had done so, if they were willing say. Subsequently, anybody in the meeting could then ask for a re-vote. The re-vote automatically reopened discussion. If a minority felt so strongly about a proposal that they just could not live with it, they could continuously call for re-votes at the meeting, effectively "filibustering," causing people to come up with a better or more comprehensive or more universally acceptable proposal.

Even after the meeting was over, if anyone still felt like it didn't sit well with them, they could call another meeting by ringing the meeting bell or putting it on a succeeding agenda. On the other hand, if people dissented on a particular decision, even if it was a fairly large number, but nobody called for a re-vote or another meeting, that decision would then stand. That minority would be essentially "standing aside."

By making the commitment to be part of a community that makes decisions by democratic vote, the minority members are obliged to stand by the consequences of the decision of the majority. As opposed to consensus decision making, the people who voted negatively could always say "I told you so" if things don't work out well. This latter observation is not necessary just a joke, because one of the potential negative consequences of some kinds of consensus decision-making processes is that people could be manipulated out of their opinions in order to reach consensus.

In some school democracies the students elect a chairperson who then chairs the meeting for a semester or some fairly long period of time. This is how it is done at Summerhill. At Shaker Mountain, everybody at one time or another chaired the meetings. Because so many of our decisions were made by democratic meetings under so many different circumstances, it was felt that it was important that everyone learn how to run a good meeting. When a new student came into the school, they would often be elected to chairperson. Then people would 'kibitz' them into becoming good chairpersons as they struggled in the initial phases.

At the beginning of each meeting the people who wanted to chair the meeting would indicate so, or there could be nominations from the membership. There was then an immediate vote by show of hands, a process that generally would only take a minute or so. The person who got the most votes would become chairperson and start the meeting, usually with the words "who called this meeting and why?" if it was a special meeting, or "what is the first thing on the agenda," if it was a regular meeting. If the chairperson needed to leave the room or was getting tired, they could appoint somebody else to be chairperson. If people felt that the person who was chairing the person was flagging in their attention or was not doing a good job at that point, they could call for a new chairperson. If there was a call for a new chairperson there would be an immediate vote whether or not there should be a new chairperson. If the majority disagreed, the chairperson continued. If the majority of people indicated that they thought there should be a new chairperson, the current chairperson could either name another chairperson at that point or there would be another immediate election. People tended to elect those whom they thought would get us through the meeting efficiently, but anybody who wanted to chair a meeting generally got a chance and had plenty of opportunities.

The meeting was not allowed to go on, whether it was a special or a general meeting, unless somebody had volunteered to take the log and keep track of the proposals and the decisions that were being made in the official log book. The log book was a large, hand bound volume of blank pages. Several log books would be filled up during a school year. When a topic was put on the agenda the chairperson would ask who put it on the agenda. The person who put it on the agenda would explain why they put it on. Then a discussion of that topic would ensue. People could make proposals that needed to seconded. Those proposals did not need to be voted on one at a time but could be voted on in a list when somebody "called the question."

One somewhat unusual decision that was made by the meeting concerned this "calling of the question." Rather than have this be done strictly by majority vote, it was determined by the meeting that if 5 people were opposed to the question being called (and, therefore, discussion being ended and a vote taken), that was sufficient for us to continue discussion. I don't recall where the number 5 came from, but it always seemed to be a reasonable procedure. For somebody just visiting the meeting for the first time, this could be very confusing because somebody would call the question; the chairperson would say "all those opposed," a vote would be taken, and if there were more than 5 people opposed, the meeting would continue. For the uninitiated, they might wonder if they had missed something: Did they miss the vote of those in favor?

The skill of the chairperson was often determined by their ability to notice when people had raised their hands to speak, and in what order. Sometimes a chairperson would write the names down so they would remember the order in which people had raised their hands. However, it was considered the prerogative of the chairperson to call on people who they felt would move the meeting forward the best. This for example might include calling on people who had not spoken yet, even if they had only raised their hands after other people who had spoken before. It was also their job to point out to the meeting when they thought certain points had already been expressed, or that people were repeating themselves. The chairperson could call for a vote without the question being called if nobody objected.

New items could be added to the agenda during the meeting. This was sometimes done at the urging of the chairperson when he felt that the business had strayed from the original agenda item and that there was another issue to be decided.

It is important to point out that there was no veto power over the decisions that were made in the school meetings. The staff, for example had two long meetings a week, but the staff had no arbitrary power. The staff were free to offer whatever classes they wanted, and discuss whatever kinds of things they thought were important to the school, but they could not make decisions for the entire school. Any changes that the staff wanted to make in the overall school policy had to be brought to the school meeting. The meetings often made many creative decisions, decisions that might not have been thought of by any individual operating on their own. I think that it is important to note that we went into the meeting without having a pre-set idea about the decisions that the meeting 'should' make, but rather, fully expected that the meeting would be greater than the sum of its parts, and would find a creative solution that no one individual could foresee.

One early decision that was made at the school meeting was the creation of the 'stop rule'. It was noted that conflicts between students often arose when two students would be horsing around and one wouldn't realize that the other had become upset. In such a circumstance, it was decided that the person would then say 'stop' at that point, and if it was not clear what they were saying 'stop' to, they would say 'stop to wrestling', or even to 'stop to calling me fatty.' Those words would communicate the fact that that student was at the point of great frustration and would otherwise feel that they were about to get into a real fight. One of the first questions that would be asked in a school meeting was "did so and so say 'stop'?" If they had said "stop" and somebody broke the stop rule, it was taken to be a very serious transgression.

We note that at Summerhill, fining people from their allowances is often a consequence of negative behavior. At Shaker Mountain people generally were of low income and did not have money which they could be fined, so a lot of discussion centered around whether a student would be given a "warning" or a "strong warning" for a particular behavior that people objected to. It was sometimes amazing to me how important people found this distinction to be. A "warning" meant that there would be no particular consequence at that point except for the equivalent of community censure. But a "strong warning" meant that the next time the community could not take that option, but needed to take action. It was very uncommon for some kind of negative behavior to go beyond the strong warning stage. When this did occasionally happen people would go scrambling through the log to see if the person had gotten a warning or a strong warning for the previous behavior.

Our meetings were not only used for discipline in that sense, but also for positive brainstorming. For example class announcements would be made in meetings. Anybody could announce a class. Trip meetings would also be announced there, and the trip meeting would decide where they were going to go and how they would raise the money to get there.

If someone had a problem that came out in a meeting that looked like it was going to take more attention than the meeting could provide, someone would often propose that there be a "small group" to help that person. Anybody could volunteer to be part of that small group but the people in the group would have to be approved by the person for whom the group was being formed, or in the case of a conflict between two people, by both parties. Our process of conflict resolution by meeting was so effective that we would often go an entire school year without any kind of a physical fight between students. Especially because of the size differentials and age differentials between students in the school, physical force was very highly frowned upon. The meeting did have the power to suspend a student from the school or kick them out of the school. What was more common as a result of serious transgressions over a period of time would be for the meeting to propose that a student be sent back through the admissions procedure and under the supervision of the admissions committee, as if they were a new student trying to get into the school. The admissions committee was comprised of students and staff who ran for the office and were elected by the school community annually. I regularly ran for it, because I usually had the basic information about a new student. Sometimes I was elected. Sometimes I wasn't. One student explained to me once that he had not voted for me because he felt I had enough power just sitting in on the admissions meetings.

One final and important point: People were respected in my school and in the meeting for who they were and what they said. I had to express myself strongly because of the fact that I had no arbitrary power. Others learned how to do the same. I knew I would be listened to, and that the meeting had fail-safe procedures. Sometimes my ideas were accepted by the meeting. More often, we came up with something better. We had faith in our ability, as a group, to solve any problem that came along. And for the 17 years that I was there, we did just that.

These ideas have been adapted for use by a wide variety of schools and programs. Sussex School, a 70 student independent alternative in Missoula, Montana, had a waiting list of 325. Those people, with the help of Sussex, hired me to help them create a new school. Organizing a meeting of potential students directly from the attendees, we had the "first meeting" of the new school, before it even had a name. My niece, 11 year old Jenifer Goldman, whom I was homeschooling at the time, chaired the first meeting. This ultimately led to the creation of Shining Mountain School. and a spinoff school called Avalon. It also led to a public school alternative that was inspired by the process.

This democratic meeting process has also been developed for use by such diverse groups as LIGHT, a Long Island homeschool group, and Islip Alternative, a public school program for "at risk" high school students. The homeschoolers were immediately at home with the idea, with even the youngest, a four year old, participating fully. At first, the students at Islip were skeptical of the idea, but as we went along, you could see the body language of the students change. They committed themselves to the idea of their own empowerment, and continued to have such meetings every week. When the school district made plans to lay off some of their teachers at the end of the school years because of budget cuts, these "at risk" students were the only ones in the district to mount a protest to the school board. One of the teachers told me that she was sure it was because they had become empowered by the democratic school meetings.

Jerry Mintz, indefatigable communicator and perennial enfant terrible (like Mozart, George Bernard Shaw and a few other self-absorbed originals), is known internationally to alternative and homeschoolers. Jerry is the founder and director of Shaker Mountain School, now defunct, former executive director of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, currently editor of AERO-GRAMME, the Alternative Education Resource Organization Newsletter, to which you may subscribe by writing to Jerry at 417 Roslyn Road., Roslyn Heights, NY 11577.

A School With Soul(e):

THE SOULE SCHOOL,
South Freeport, Maine:
An Elementary Alternative,

by Mabel Dennison

I asked one child what he thought of his school, the Soule School, in South Freeport. He said, 'The school is great.' It is a school of four classrooms, eighty-five children, four teachers, a secretary and special district teachers. Another child said, 'There is more freedom here, we are allowed to come back in during recess. At other schools they aren't.' Another child said, 'It is different this year. There is no first grade.' The four grades are 2, 3, 4 and 5. The student explained that on most Fridays the children have sessions with children in the Mixed Grade Program at the Morse St. School instead of their old one-time Friday activities at the Soule School, with more choice than usual. He thought awhile and said that the changes are an improvement.

There were fourteen handwritten rules posted in a hallway. The list included the following: 'You may not go off school bounds. No climbing trees. No making fun of what people are wearing. You can save two places only if you tell who they are saved for.' The rules are reviewed by the children together every year. The Soule School has a twenty-three point position paper called George C. Soule School Philosophy, which consists of expectations for both children and adults.

I asked the Principal, Gene Berg, how he thinks the school has won distinction. Students have won regional math prizes recently, as any visitor can see from the trophies in the hall which children pick up to inspect. Mr. Berg told me that the achievement test scores are at the 50th, or near 50th percentile, for the second and third grades. The fourth grade test scores are around the 60th percentile, and the fifth grade scores near the 85th percentile. This is an extraordinary result, and one would think parents would be clamoring to know what kind of school brings such results. In so many elementary school situations, and for many school children, achievement scores as well as aptitude scores go down after first and second grades.

At the Soule School each morning children attend a math class and a language arts/reading class. Each child has chosen one of two teachers for the year for math, and one of two for language arts. The children in the math classes use workbooks or textbooks, and they all use sheets made up by the teachers. The classroom walls show temperature graphs, personal statistics of weight and strength, computer drawings, and many survey results. The work has to be assigned individually as there are four grades in one room. The teacher works with one child at a time or leads a discussion group of five or six children. The other children work alone or in small groups or in pairs.

Language arts classes are arranged the same way with teachers acting as coaches, and sometimes as discussion leaders for a small group. The children either talk quietly or work silently. They work on group reading assignments, on individual reading and spelling, and on writing. The writing the children do is read with interest and enthusiasm by a teacher. It is commented on and corrected, not graded.

Following a meeting, the afternoon class at the Soule School is one single time period that can be an art class, a lecture with discussion, or a project on a theme. They are interdisciplinary workshops that can include social studies, science, language arts and math. I saw one group of children writing their goals for a week's stay at the Chewonki nature center, after going outdoors to a field to practice making a human pyramid. I saw children listening to complicated information about the heart. They tested the pulse indoors and again after jumping outdoors. They had a long discussion, with many examples, about what keeps the heart healthy.

The eighty-five children of the Soule School choose one of four afternoon workshops, each lasting two or three weeks. Following is a list of some of the afternoon workshops for the year, occasionally limited to an age group:

> All Kinds of Art, Nature Day and Night, Rocks, Good Sports (discussion, playing of games, review and writing)
>
> Lighthouses of Maine, Maine Mammals, Treasure Island (reading out loud, history, geography, singing, dramatic reading by a visitor), News Magazine
>
> Gluskabe — Legends of the Wabanaki, Pines, Oaks and Redwoods, Speak Out (memorizing, public speaking, public address system, tape recording), Making a book
>
> Thy Friend Obadiah, Hands On! (pastels, tempera, tissue paper, etc.), Editorials and Editorial Cartoons, Maps and Globes

Newspaper in Education Week, Arctic Explorers and Nature, Washington and Lincoln, Look It Up! How to Find Out Anything

Writing Plays, Dinosaurs, Logo, Math Activities and Recreations, Tessellations

First Aid, 'Thar She Blows,' Astronomy, Inventions, Letters!

Making Books, Ancient Egypt, Risk, Charlotte's Web

Harraseeket Salt Water Farm, Wild About Weather (daily log, experiments, field trip), Rural Life in 19th Century Maine, Poems and Fables

Fantasy Fish (drawing, papier maché, study), Chewonki, Doing An Experiment, Your Body and How It Works

Each child has been to a quarter of, or ten of, the workshops mentioned above, and has seen products of others in the shared classrooms. At a curriculum festival at the Soule School I once saw a play, a number of animated Super 8 films made by teams of children, and a rocket launching with many entries. By designing interdisciplinary workshops, some as basic as reading a book out loud and discussing it, teachers are exercising one of the great ongoing choices of elementary pedagogy, whether to teach a subject as a systematic, abstract field of study, or to 'teach it,' and let it be learned incidentally, as part of a project or an activity that has real circumstances.

The teachers of the South School seem to be 'in synch' with the students. The feedback from teachers talking quietly, and the interaction between teachers and students, provide the extrinsic motivation to students to do their work. There are scores on statewide tests, and on annual achievement tests. Math is corrected, but not graded. The Freeport school district is developing a yearly writing sample record that is holistically assessed. There are no marks on report cards. Not being driven by teachers, and by testing and grading, children absorb experiences slowly and deeply, with varied meaning possible for each individual. A probable result is the high achievement scores in the middle grades, and children with plenty of intrinsic motivation to think and to learn.

The Freeport district parents of children in the second through the fifth grades can choose the most suitable school for their child among three schools, the traditional elementary program of the Morse St. School, a new Mixed Grade Program at the Morse St. School, and the Soule School. Parents have a choice like this in some of the school districts in large cities across the country. The Mixed Grade Program uses rooms in the Morse St. School for four grades with a head teacher and three other teachers. The children study math and reading in ability level classes, and have mixed grades for some science and social studies classes.

The Soule School may be the hardest to clean at the end of the day of the three schools, with children being allowed to go in and out at recess. The children get exercise by having to walk to the office every time they need a sheet of paper or a pencil. There are a great variety of seating arrangements at the Soule, School, now in the 16th year of its alternative program. I saw cubicles for study, a bathtub to sit in, single desks, desks grouped together, tables with benches from a diner, and tall stools around high tables.

George C. Soule School Philosophy

We believe that children should be encouraged to be self-directing, to make decisions and accept the consequences.

We believe that children need time to follow their interests, to experience success and failure — in other words, to give the child practice in some of the behaviors that make responsible adults.

We believe that children should have the freedom to pursue their personal interests and goals and to develop new ones.

We believe that children should be encouraged to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their actions.

We believe that children should have the total community as their learning environment and should be taken to every possible place of their interest.

We believe that children should practice self-government and should come to feel important as part of the school community by participating in decisions that affect the school.

We believe that children should be allowed to work and play with children of other ages in a family-like atmosphere.

We believe that children should evaluate their own progress, have regular input into their curriculum, and take some responsibility for the planning and carry-through of related learning activities.

We believe that children should feel good about themselves, and should meet regularly for the opportunity to discuss their feelings and concerns.

We believe that children should have fun in school.

We believe that children should have personal freedom, but not at the expense of the freedom of others.

We believe that teachers should identify individual needs and make provisions for work at different levels of difficulty and for different styles of learning.

We believe that teachers should take children's ideas into consideration when planning learning activities.

We believe that teachers should provide an environment of mutual trust and understanding — an environment that is warm, loving, relaxed, and non-competitive.

We believe that, where appropriate, teachers should share decision-making with the parents and students.

We believe that teachers should recognize that the learning process is usually more important than its content.

We believe that teachers should report students' progress by stating what they have accomplished.

We believe that teachers should be encouraged to expand the basic curriculum by bringing their own interests into the classroom.

We believe that teachers should enjoy their work and share their enthusiasm with the students and each other.

We believe that teachers should be available and unshockable so that children will not have to live with unnecessary guilt for their human behavior.

We believe that teachers should foster a close association with parents based on honest communication.

We believe that teachers should have personal freedom, but not at the expense of the freedom of others.

We believe that parents should play an active role in the education of their children and in the Soule School program.

You may write to The Soule School in care of:

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The Soule School, P.O. Box 150, So Freeport, ME 04078
Telephone, (207) 865-4561
Freeport Public Schools, Freeport, Maine

Mabel Dennison (Box 538, Temple, Me 04984) has had experience as a parent and teacher in three private alternative elementary schools, including the First Street School about which her husband, George Dennison, has written so eloquently in* The Lives of Children. *This article, written in April, 1987, expresses the author's unique perspective on learning and children.

TWO BY SANDY HURST ON UPATTINAS:

WHY UPATTINAS?

**by Sandy Hurst, Director of Upattinas
and Past President of the National Coalition
of Alternative Community Schools**

> Why are we so interested in an alternative school? Why are we willing to work so hard for an idea, for a future hope? Is it to reflect ourselves—to give ourselves reason, to project what we believe and change the things we don't like? What are our expectations?
>
> We want a school. We want an atmosphere. We believe in our children, even if we are unsure of ourselves. We want a feeling that we can live in a natural way; we want to commit ourselves to a real, involved community—to flourish. Our school will be an idea, not a place—a fertile playground, not a building—an organic stage—hopefully a working philosophy for all of us, young and old to expand beyond ourselves.
>
> If we want to be free, then our children must be free. What do we want to do with our schools? First, we want to trust our children. We want them to be self-sufficient, happy with themselves, weak and strong, sensitive to the larger world; honest. We will give our children the chance to become, we will do everything we can to try and understand them—to live with them. Ours will be a community school....
>
> Jasper Brinton,
> Parent, 1971.

And so we began—after six months of meeting and planning—after hours and hours of discussion and hammering out of policies. We would be a Parent Cooperative School modeled after the pre-school of our origins, Charlestown Play House, in Phoenixville, PA. We would be truly democratic, allowing the vote to anyone who participated in the discussion and decision-making process—parent, student, teacher. And so we remain—after fourteen years, with somewhat less support from our parents (this is not, after all, a fashionable idea any longer)—still committed to the idea that democracy works and that for those parents who wish to be involved with their children, the cooperative also can work.

In a time when many people are saying that schools must once again take over the discipline and training of our nation's youth; that we must go back to the old ways of teaching by using more rigorous structure and policing children more effectively; what is the rationale for a school which chooses to remain open, flexibly structured, humanistic and (oh, what a loaded word!) free?

Galileo said, "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him discover it in himself." We at UPATTINAS believe that, by providing the opportunity to explore and experience the world as a whole and many of the diverse people therein, our school can be a vehicle for the joyful discovery of all that is within and its positive application to life and future learning.

Discovery and creativity are fostered by an environment where time is available, play and experimentation are nurtured and expected, informal discourse is encouraged—not just for little children, but for those in high school as well. I remember being a child along a stream, collecting and examining, changing the waterway, floating sticks and leaves. Shouldn't all children have the time and space for such learning? Why not let school be a group of people on a camping trip to the desert? Let them sleep on the ground, try to find trees on which to tie up their tents. Let them cope with not having enough water to wash their hair every day. Drive them over the roadways first broken by the wagon trains, over the mountains and plains roamed by native Americans. Call it Geography or Social Studies, call it Environmental Science, or, indeed, Creative Human Relationships. Or just say, as did John Dewey in *Democracy and Education*, that schools are not a preparation for life; they are life. That's why UPATTINAS!

Certainly there is a place for structured classes and for the discipline of formal study in the lives of children. And certainly there are some very basic areas of study to be covered. These are what we like to call the "tool skills"—those basic skills upon which much future learning is built. We believe, however, that while there are optimal times for learning certain skills and concepts, there is no magic moment beyond which there is no hope. If that were the case, our friend John Holt would never have known the joy of learning to play the cello, a process which he describes so eloquently in his book *Never Too Late*. If that were the case, little Jeff, who struggled every day to learn to read in spite of a "learning disability" would never have had the courage to grow up and go to college, nor would he have been encouraged to try. Our school provides the tools—books, paper, pens and pencils of all colors, blocks—you know

—all those THINGS children need. But there is also Nancy to cuddle up beside and read a book; Terry to follow through the woods and caves; Reno, who will always help to find whatever you're looking for; Warren, who quietly helps you try again; Teenie to watch you jump one more time; and Sandy to share your tears and joys.

But what of other basic skills? What of personal discipline, relationship skills, problem solving? At UPATTINAS students are encouraged to develop their own internal discipline, beginning with following through on commitments made to others, taking responsibility for the consequences of their own actions. We believe that discipline imposed from without will stay outside of the individual. We do not believe that punishment will motivate a child toward self-discipline nearly as effectively as will accepting the natural consequences of his actions, a concept presented by Rudolph Dreikurs in his book *Challenge of Parenthood* in 1979. For example, if a student says he or she wants to participate in a class but always forgets to bring a pencil or complete the work expected, it probably means that, indeed, that student does not really want to participate in that class. He will therefore probably be asked to try it again at another time when he is ready. No failure is entered on any record—no incomplete is recorded. The natural consequence of not participating is not being a part of that group and not learning those skills at that time.

Adults and students at UPATTINAS work together for a higher understanding of life. They find that they need to take time for sharing, for mutual searching and coping, for being together and working toward a goal—be it the goal of learning a new skill or solving everyday problems. This does not mean that students will never experience difficulty or failure, mistakes in judgment or lost opportunities. What it does mean is that they will have the safety of caring adults to help them know that they can learn from mistakes, make better decisions the next time, say to themselves—and, if need be, to others—"I blew it. I'm sorry." —and build from there.

One of the values of a small school based on democratic ideals is that it offers the opportunity for young people to practice democracy and to feel their personal impact. We believe that the only true way to learn about democracy is actually to live it. Voting for or against an issue means nothing if your vote has no power. At UPATTINAS everyone's vote counts —students, parents and teachers. Every issue of importance to the school is brought to a vote. This means that people (including the children) must wrestle with differing opinions, difficult emotions, the feelings of others. It means that we must live with the will of the majority (even though we strive for consensus) while nurturing the rights of each individual to have different opinions. It means that everyone has a chance to develop personal power and to try it out in a safe place. It is much more meaningful to live with the outcome of a policy set by your group according to its needs than to accept rules set by others. It is also more realistic to expect students to understand and accept a larger government after they have actually struggled with the governance of their own school. At UPATTINAS every student knows that he or she has the power to bring about change, but that, in order to get something done, one must learn to define goals and clarify ideas. One must learn to follow through with courage and hard work if those goals are to be reached. It is also understood that one always may question and redefine ideas in the search for better solutions.

Many people believe that learning must be done by the "bitter pill" method. We believe that valid learning in every sphere can and indeed must be done, in spite of hard work and sometimes disappointment, with joy and delight for the most part. It is when that feeling of joy and fulfillment in learning itself is felt, as, say, in discovering the beautiful expression of an idea, the clarity of a proof in math or the potential of scientific experimentation that most people choose to continue to grow and to learn all that they can of what this vast world has to offer, no matter what the challenge.

One of the main problems facing educators today is the need to help their students to establish values which are compatible with the society into which they will be thrust. Some people argue that the schools should teach children "right and wrong" and "the meaning of life." We hold with E.F. Schumacher in his book, *Small Is Beautiful*, that "...education is the transmission of ideas which enable man to choose between one thing and another." We believe that children should work with many different ideas, accepting and discarding, as they develop more and more understanding. It is important that young people struggle with the age-old concept of good and evil, that they come to terms with their own views of others, and that they ultimately develop their own sets of values. We believe that, through discussions of the philosophies of many different peoples and through careful examination of their own ideas, we will more adequately help each child to find a personal ethic and life philosophy on which to build. To that end there is much discussion, work with relationships, exposure to many different systems of thought, and questioning. This is done in an atmosphere of acceptance and respect for the feelings of others. It is one of the most important aspects of UPATTINAS, and we believe that it is our most important function in the lives of children.

In the end, that loaded word "freedom" means to us that our children are free to grow and develop at their own pace, to think and learn with others of all ages and in many different ways. They are free to make mistakes, try ideas, set their own standards and test them in a nurturing place. Our children are free to plan their time, choose their paths and to change their minds. This kind of freedom builds strength, confidence and the skills they need to become happy, contributing adults.

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TRAVELING WITH STUDENTS

by Sandy Hurst

Let it be clear from the beginning of this article that everyone has a different style of traveling and of working with students while on a trip. This is a description of one school's style, and the styles of several of the adults who lead that school's trips.

During the second year of Upattinas School, while the group of students from twelve through fourteen were studying space exploration, the question arose of whether it would be possible to actually see the launching of the final Apollo mission from Florida. None of us had ever traveled with more than our own families, nor had we yet bought a school van in which to go. At the time we had a teacher, J, who drove a Blazer, and a mother who was willing to take the time, so off they went with five students to Florida. They took ragtag tents and sleeping bags, borrowed cooking equipment and as few dollars as they thought they could get away with, and they came back with many stories and wonderful pictures.

Many years and many miles since then, we have learned a great deal about traveling with groups of people, not necessarily just teenagers. One of the most important things that stays with us is that you can do it! It is possible to cross the United States, indeed to leave the country, on just about the same amount of money per person that most families spend on their children when they're at home. And given adults who have lots of dedication and sense of humor, you can enjoy it.

Our trips have ranged to Nova Scotia, Minnesota's Boundary Waters, the Great Smoky Mountains, the Everglades, Baja Mexico and across the Mexican mainland, California, and throughout the Southwest. We have visited many of the major national parks and cities around the United States, and we find that we especially enjoy a mix of cultural and natural experiences.

In planning for a long adventure, it is important for the leaders to establish the style of the trip with the students interested in participating. In a democratic society like ours, students expect to be consulted and to help with all aspects of planning, but it is also important that they know that the final responsibility for their welfare lies with the adults and that the adults on the trip take this responsibility very seriously. Thus, we establish what we call ground rules very early in the planning. These ground rules reflect the comfort level of the adults leading the trip as to safety, health of participants, general conduct while on the road and at the various stops, etc.

One of the most important considerations for adults leading trips is that of safety. At least one of the leaders should have training in basic First Aid and CPR. The leaders must feel confident in their decisions about driving speed, time behind the wheel, and any decision making which may be needed during hiking or other outdoor excursions. Decisions about such matters may include consultation with the group, but the final responsibility must lie with a leader who is willing to take on the consequences. Our experience tells us that all-night driving is rarely indicated unless there are extra drivers. It leads to irritability and inter-personal problems as well as being a safety hazard. It is also important to talk about and work with the tolerance limits of drivers as to noise level in the bus or van. Some people don't mind loud music, but for others it is a drain on nerves and concentration. This is an area for group discussion and decision making, but one must assume that the group will consider the driver or that the driver must set the rules. There can be no compromise when actual safety is at stake.

Another area where safety is of the utmost concern is that of adventure experiences such as back-packing, caving, climbing, canoeing, and rafting. Only people who have experience with these skills should make decisions about weather, general conditions, and the condition or ability of any member of the group. Preparation is of the utmost importance in these areas. A group does not need to prepare before leaving home, but there needs to be practice sessions and short trial runs built into the over-all planning of a trip so that every member of the group can develop the necessary skills and stamina to have a successful experience. One time on a school trip, we took along a girl who was anorexic. We did not know it before the trip, so a decision had to be made during the trip about whether to allow her to continue. We had planned a back-packing hike and the leaders determined that it would be unsafe for her to hike with gear unless she would show that she could and would eat for several days before the hike. We felt that it would also have been an unpleasant experience for the other students. We told her about our decision and offered to call her parents and send her home before the hike. She elected to stay with us and to eat. Obviously, this was an unusual case, but it is an example of the kind of decision-making leaders need to be prepared to do. Needless to say, we were very angry that her parents did not let us know about her condition—for which, we later discovered, she was being treated before we left. This points up the importance of knowing as much as possible about each trip participant—health history, allergies, mental health, etc. It also points up the importance of having along parental permission slips allowing students to be treated medically, and emergency contact information for the families of each student.

Trips to cities where students are not familiar pose other sorts of safety considerations. Early in our years of traveling with students, we went to San Francisco. Everyone was sure that he or she could find bus and trolley routes and the kids prevailed upon the adults to allow them some time on their own. Luckily, when given their freedom, it turned out that most of them were too timid to actually use it, and they stayed with the adults or the two students who had been there before. In retrospect, I would advise leaders not to allow high schoolers free rein in major cities. Certainly there are areas where they can be safe, and with good rapport and trust established ahead of time, some free time is important and valuable. But it is also important that the adults know about the area of the city and set careful limits on time and parameters.

One of the most valuable and fun experiences in the city is that of learning to use the transit system. Teach the students how to read the instructions, maps, codes, etc. Give them time to try their skills on bus, subways, and trains. Plan excursions on public transportation into your trip even when you have your own vans. You can learn a great deal about a city by riding the bus from one end of its run to another. Help the students to see all the variety of architecture, neighborhoods, stores, and people. This is especially important for people who come from small towns and the country. Teach them, also, how to use the agencies of the city if they should get lost or find themselves in any kind of trouble. These are survival tools which all of us should have.

Along with safety come health considerations. Any group traveling for an extended period of time must work at staying healthy. That means, at the very least, very clean practices when it comes to food handling and dishes. It's amazing how many teenagers don't know how to wash dishes for maximum cleanliness. We periodically collect dishes and sterilize them in order to keep contagious conditions at bay. We also stop once every week to wash clothes which also takes some care for some students who may have never washed their own clothes before. We took such a student on one trip. His mother had bought him an expensive Damart undershirt and he put it into the hot dryer. It came out looking like a baby's shirt. Luckily he was a good sport, because he took a lot of ribbing about it for the rest of the trip.

Keeping one's body clean is rarely a problem for teenagers these days until they find that they cannot take a shower every day. Again, it's a matter of experience, and once they find out that you can stay clean by washing one part at a time, they are infinitely adaptable. This brings up a problem which different people solve differently. We are very ecologically minded. For this reason we do not allow bathing with soap, even biodegradable soap, in streams or lakes. We bring pots or basins of water from the stream, but let the soapy water run down into the ground (not directly under a plant or tree). Even biodegradable soaps cause pollution in streams, and it's not very reassuring when you are standing by a stream and soap bubbles come floating by. There are some times when there is just not enough water for every day bathing by a large group. When we were in Baja California (which is really in Mexico), we were surrounded by salt water, but fresh water was scarce and we could not carry enough for everyone to have unlimited quantities. So—the students learned to wear their hair in braids and to tie bandannas over it to help it stay clean for longer. We would take turns using the rinse water from the dishes for the first wash, rinsing the soap out with sea water, and only rinsing once with fresh water. It wasn't the most comfortable way to wash one's hair, but it did the job for the two weeks we were there. This kind of experience has incredible side effects. It not only helps people to see how much we really waste in our society, but it gives them insight into their own fortitude and flexibility, into the reality of life in other countries and communities, and some real problem solving situations.

And, what about toileting? We had a really funny episode on that trip to Baja. We had invited a young man from the village near where we were camping to spend an evening with us. He spoke almost no English and my halting Spanish did not include the words he was using. Finally, with the help of my trusty dictionary, he made it clear that what he wanted to know was "How do you urinate?" So we got out our shovel and roll of toilet paper and showed him how we dig a hole, do the job, and burn the paper before we cover the hole. Again, this seems to be just too awful to many people until they fund out that it is, perhaps, even a better way to get rid of bodily waste. On our trip to the Canyonlands the students even found themselves decorating their spots! If you're going to another country, it's a good idea to find out beforehand how one asks for public bathrooms. In most countries you can just use the word toilet, but in parts of Mexico and other Central American countries, there are no toilets and one has to learn the local way to express this need. On our trip we used 'el escusado', which means 'the place to which you excuse yourself.'

When it comes to treating illness or injury, we follow our First Aid training and our instincts and experience. We always carry along a supply of anti-diarrhea and upset stomach medicine recommended by a doctor. We also carry antibiotics and antihistamines in case of infection or reaction to stings. And, when we are on a trip involving back-packing or other such adventure activities, we carry several pain pills and the proper equipment to stabilize broken bones. We have been very lucky not to ever have had to cope with anything more serious than one person who ran a high fever and had a strep throat in Mexico. We took him to the local emergency room and were on our way in no time. We have had many episodes of colds and sore throats, and stomach upsets. These just run their course with the usual treatments used at home. One very important thing to keep in mind is to remind everyone to drink plenty of fluids and eat the kind of foods which contribute to keeping the stomach and bowels healthy. This is often a necessary part of the teaching about the trip and can be brought into meal planning and cooking.

That brings us to meals. We are consistently able to provide good tasting, well balanced meals, for about $3.50 per person per day. That does not include meat at every meal, but this is another learning experience for the participants. The variety of sandwiches we create by the time we are on the way home is endless. Usually, we leave school well stocked with staple foods and those we can carry without too much refrigeration because we get a discount for volume buying from our local super market. We carry two picnic coolers and two large wooden boxes as well as two smaller boxes for lunch and snack foods. We guarantee healthy food and snacks, but the trip money does not buy soda or candy.

One of the favorite foods on our hiking and camping trips is beef jerky which we make ourselves before we leave. We also mix our own trail mix and pancake mix and package our back-packing foods ourselves. We use a variety of dry vegetables, noodles, hard cheeses, parmesan cheese, pepperoni, soup mixes, and our own mix of peanut butter fudge. For these trips we carry water purification tablets and allow no one to drink from streams, no matter how remote they are. The prevalence of ghiardia in even the farthest reaches of the mountains makes this imperative. We boil any water we use for cooking for several minutes, and we fill canteens with any left-over boiled water. A tiny bit of lemon juice in the canteen helps to mask the flavor of treated water.

When we are traveling on the road and in non-primitive camps, we carry Coleman type stoves and cook in much the same way we do at home, but with usually only two hot dishes. We try to have many green salads and lots of fruits available. We use lots of grains and cheese. When a trip is going to be out for a month, hot dogs and hamburgers get old fast. Our students have a lot of fun concocting new recipes with simple foods. One of our favorite campground meals is Navajo Tacos—Indian fry bread with refried beans, cheese, sauce, and tomatoes and lettuce all piled on top. We also find stir-fried vegetables and rice popular, as is beef stew made with canned meat and vegetables so that it doesn't take so long to cook.

This kind of travel and every day planning can become very tiring for everyone sometimes. On the days when we're all feeling used up and stressed we try to find a small restaurant which will give us a good price for breakfast or dinner. Sometimes we stop at whatever fast food service is available. In order to avoid the inevitable argument over which fast food is better, we try to find a strip and give out the appropriate amount of money for each person to use wherever they want.

Where to stay seems to be the next big consideration. Upattinas trips are camping trips, and as such, are set up to use the out-of-doors as sleeping space. We travel on long trips during the times of the year when the temperature does not go below about fifteen degrees. Shorter, more specialized trips may be actually winter camping trips. Most of our camping is done in state and national parks, preferably national parks because they are not as expensive. We have found, however, that you are much more likely to find hot showers at state parks, so we try to strike a balance. We use maps and standard camp ground listings to find the sites nearest to our stopping place for the night. Occasionally we use youth hostels, but they are much more expensive per person. Only twice have we used motels both times when we were traveling in extremely severe weather and felt that we could not out-run the storm. In such cases you can almost always find a kind manager who will give a special price and let the people double up in the rooms.

Sometimes, no matter how well you plan, you find yourselves needing to stop and rest and with no place to go. On such occasions we have been known to use roadside rest stops, (not legal in some states, so beware), a farmer's field (always with permission if he can be found), or just the off-the-road countryside where we find ourselves. In such instances we stay clustered together so that we can move if we have to. We do not use our vans for sleeping except in the most impossible

Scenes from Upattinas School

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because of the need for people to separate from each other as well as because of the extra wear it causes to the inside of the vans.

Equipment for individual members of our trips must be able to be packed into a back-pack and a day pack. Each person may have two bags only, so that we have room in the vans for the other equipment and the people. We give everyone a basic list of necessary items and make sure that they each have each item before we leave. our list has served us well for many years, so I am including it here for reference. You will note that we ask them to bring two bandannas. That is because we do not carry and use the quantities of paper towels you would need for wiping up dishes, spills, etc. Each person learns to use a bandanna for all kinds of clean-up jobs.

Sample personal equipment list:
Light weight sleeping bag good to 15 degrees
Plastic ground cloth
Sleeping pad (not a heavy air mattress)
Back pack lined with plastic garbage bags
Day pack or bag (no paper or light plastic)
Back packer tent or tarp (if you have one)
2 Bandannas
Flashlight & extra batteries
Eating utensils and dishes (one bowl, cup & spoon will do)
Pocket knife (no hunting or other larger knives)
Water bottle (canteen or plastic bottle)
Suntan lotion
Baseball or other visor cap for shade
Wool cap and gloves
Rain gear and jacket
Clothing for one week including plenty of socks, sturdy long pants, shorts, bathing suit, cotton and wool shirts and a wool sweater.
Solid hiking boots and sneakers
Notebook and pen

One of the most important boxes to go on a Upattinas School trip is the library box. In it are books for all sorts of identification, first aid, cook books, and story books. We often spend evenings reading to each other from books by the great naturalists or story tellers. We share Indian lore and ghost stories and poetry and anything anyone brings to enjoy. Each student brings a book to read while traveling, a notebook and pen. Each day we set aside a writing time and often we share what we write. We sing, too. Sometimes we surprise ourselves with how many songs we learn while on a trip.

In planning for our trips, we usually give out what we call a 'Poop Sheet' about a month before we leave. This includes available general information and equipment list, cost, dates, and style of trip. About a week before we leave we give every family an itinerary which includes contact phone numbers and addresses and instructions about getting emergency information to us by way of local police or park rangers. We also require a permission slip allowing the student to travel with us and to be treated medically should the necessity arise. It helps to have the parent's health plan and number on that slip.

As you read through all of this, you may wonder how you could ever organize and live through an extended trip with students. Take heart—after many years and many trips, it has become almost second nature to me. My pack stays partially packed, my doctor expects to call for prescriptions to freshen our first aid supply, our grocery store says 'Where are you going this year?' And the girls at the bank are glad not to have to count my endless deposits of dollars raised at lunches, cake sales, and such for a while. Even some of the students are able to estimate how much oatmeal we'll use and how many cases of tuna before everyone hates it.

Perhaps the most rewarding outcome of this kind of trip is the closeness we gain by being together through so many different conditions and sharing each others' good times and bad. It is inevitable over a month's time that everyone, including the adults, will have bad moods, be lonely for loved ones, not feel really well. But everyone will also have times of joy and feelings of boundless good health and love, and those times seem to override the difficult times. At about the tenth day you'll find that homesickness and irritability are king. But that passes in a day or two and the next two weeks are like magic in the group. At least that's the way I've experienced it through at least eleven of these trips. What a rich way to share in the search for community and caring — as well as to learn about our world first hand!

Sandy Hurst was for many years the director of Upattinas School in Glenmoore, PA; a past president of NCACS and long-time member of the national Board of the Coalition; a founder and director of the international teacher training program of the Coalition, and is now a founding member and director of the Upattinas Open Community Corporation, a very successful learning resource for teachers and students from all over the world which has succeeded the school.

TWO FROM EMANUEL PARISER ON THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL:

A DAY IN THE LIFE: THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

by Emanuel Pariser

The Community School sits at the top of Washington Street in Camden, Maine. Its conventional white clapboard three story architecture belies the intense non-traditional education which takes place within. A small sign in need of repainting hanging on the front porch is the only obvious indication that the building houses anything different than the similarly built homes which abut it. The 1985 Dodge Van adorned with the School's whimsical CS logo, and the comfortable porch furniture —a gold three-cushioned couch and a molded plastic chair which looks like a refugee from a major airport—do little to distinguish the School from its surroundings.

Our visit to the School will take place on one day late in the fall of 1989. The day begins in darkness because the sun has not yet made its ascent over Camden's sheltered harbor, and the sky has not yet had a chance to turn the azure blue it wants to when the winds blow from the northwest. It's 6:15; an alarm clock rattles somewhere on the third floor and Steve rises out of bed and stands up quietly, avoiding the half-eaten dish of ice cream which is occupying the space next to his sneakers. He moves quietly and quickly, throwing on his working clothes, checking his wallet for lunch money, and combing his hair rapidly.

Steve's first really conscious decision of the day is whether or not to wake up John. John sleeps in the same room and depends heavily on other people to get him up in the morning. He often greets anyone who does attempt to arouse him with a series of brief negative utterances. John may well lose his job if he is late again, but Steve has made it clear that he won't wake him up any more if John is going to complain.

Steve slips out of the room without disturbing John, and, picking his way down the steep third floor stairway, thinks that it's really the staff's job to deal with John, not his, and besides, he doesn't need the added aggravation.

The questions of motivation and responsibility raised here must be addressed by the entire school community. Who is responsible for getting John up? How can we teach him to get up to an alarm clock? Is he demonstrating that he doesn't want to be at the School, or doesn't he know how to get up on a consistent basis? What is going on in his current life at school that he wishes to sleep through? How was he awakened in his past? Do we let him lose his job and learn through "natural consequences", or do we "carry" him until he is able to actualize the necessary behavior? Who are "we" in this case?

It is indicative of the School's emphasis on preparation for "real life", that this issue will get as much attention and thought as a question about John's hatred for science.

But for Steve, now navigating through the music room, which has collected dishes, glasses, cups, and over-filled ashtrays as though it were some magical magnet attracting only used kitchenware, these issues are not immediately relevant. He enjoys his work painting and scraping down at the wharf. He likes the idea of working and finishing school at the same time. Perhaps for the first time in his life, he has waked up looking forward to a day not filled with failure.

Steve fixes himself some coffee and toast for breakfast, gives up on a half-hearted attempt to corral some food for lunch, and takes out some frozen hamburger for the supper he will cook this evening. Cindy, the staff member who is on today, walks through the kitchen with toothbrush, towel, and shampoo in hand. Kelly, a fellow student, is rumbling through the refrigerator looking for food she ordered for her lunch that seems to have disappeared.

After a couple of cordial words with Kelly on the pros and cons of hiding your food in unmarked sandwich bags, Steve bangs out the front door at 7:45. He walks down the Washington Street hill feeling the first mildly warm rays of the sun whose attempts to raise the temperature from the early morning's chilly teens are unimpressive.

Back on the third floor, John continues his slumbers unperturbed by the honk from his boss's pickup truck or the angry rattling of the tools in the truck's bed as the vehicle accelerates away. An hour later John is downstairs having gotten a wake-up knock from Cindy and is trying to cadge a ride to his work site. John explains that it's too far to walk to, impossible to hitch there, and really it's all Steve's fault because he promised to re-set the alarm when he got up in the first place.

On the basis of previous discussions with John about getting up and getting to work, Cindy declines to intercede in the fate which has befallen him on this crisp autumn day. She suggests that he get hold of the boss, explain the situation and figure out a way to get to work if he is still needed.

John has not yet made up his mind whether or not the School will be a place to find success, or simply a new place to fail. There is certainly nothing about the program which guarantees success; in fact at times like this, John feels that the whole experience is positively confusing. He wonders: why are they not helping? Isn't that what the staff are paid to do? Why didn't Steve wake him up? Is it worth it? He decides to take a walk and see how things look when he gets back.

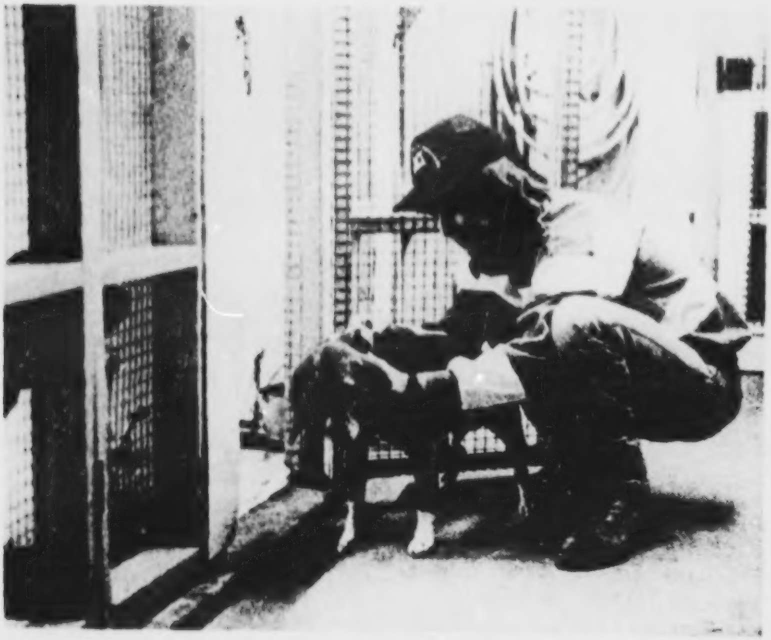
Despite Cindy's concern over John's fate at the School (she is his "one-to-one," a special advocate for him in the school community), she gives him the space to make his decisions. In any case she does not have the time to track him down right now because two new students are waiting for jobs class to begin and she is the teacher.

Work forms fully one third of the School's core curriculum. Students cannot possibly hope to realize their goal of independence when they leave if they cannot find and hold a job. For experiential learners, a job which involves training and

Apprenticeship, paid work+learning through the internship program.

pay is an ideal educational experience. For students who have never had the sense that they could support themselves, work is the primary avenue through which society will grant them a measure of autonomy. For students whose economic situations are such that earning income takes precedence over day school, daytime work and night school allow the program to harmonize these discordant pressures. The School also offers apprentice and internship programs to students who lack the skills or self confidence to hold an entry level job.

Cindy is helping Sally and Kris, two new arrivals, to define what their job interests are. Sally claims to have superior secretarial skills and be an adept computer operator, but she has never held a job for more than two months because of family issues. Kris, on the other hand, only knows what she doesn't like for work, has never held a job, and is not sure what might interest her. Hoping that a real-life search might stimulate effort and interest, Cindy opens up the latest edition of the local newspaper and the trio scours the help wanted ads.



Student helps out at the Animal Shelter for his social service.

As Sally and Kris take turns calling possible job sites, and impossible ones (Sally has noticed that a book publishing company needs a managing editor), Cindy gets up to answer the tentative knocking on the front door.

An interviewee has arrived earlier than expected. Two men step in, the taller asking if this is the Community School. They couldn't find it by the directions they were given and have been driving around town for the past 20 minutes.

As Cindy ushers the two into the living room, John returns from his walk around the block. He notices the unfamiliar maroon pickup truck parked in front of the School and wonders who's visiting. John has decided not to call his boss today because he would just get the guy mad; and if he was really that mad, John could always find another job.

The fact that John owes $200 in room and board expenses —students who owe more than $250 without special cause are asked to leave the program—and can't afford at this point to lose his job and look for another, is a thought which, if allowed at all to enter his consciousness, is quickly dismissed as irrelevant to the day's activities.

Discovering that Cindy is in the living room with an interviewee, he reflects for a moment on his initial impressions of the School. When he first visited with his parents it didn't seem like a "school" at all. There were papers all over the front counter and a hurriedly written sign in magic marker saying "Please Clean Your Dirty Dishes—Chore Evaders BEWARE!!" taped at one edge of the counter top.

John's interview seemed very long and involved. Buck, a staff member, kept wanting to know about his family, what he wanted to do in life and asked him to say something good about himself. That seemed pretty weird to John. Then he had to call back to say he was interested and they wouldn't let his mom call for him.

The acceptance process at the School is long and involved. It is most important that students see this as their own choice, and that they are clear as to what they hope to get out of coming. Students who succeed come from a wide variety of situations for a relatively small number of reasons. They want to finish high school, to attain a credential which has in the past seemed totally out of reach. They want to do more with their lives than hang out and survive. They want to individuate from their families. They want to learn practical responsibility so that they can function more successfully on their own.

John wonders how he got accepted. Only one out of eight applicants gets in, someone had emphasized—probably to make him feel better. All he had to do was write a letter back describing something good about himself, read "Fourth of July", a pretty cool book about Vietnam, and write a short report on how he felt about it. That was easy. Next thing he knew he was driving up with all his bags for the first day of the trial period.

By the time John has finished reminiscing about his own interview, a man comes out of the living room and sits down at the dining room table. John nods hello, and walks off to make himself some coffee. Time has opened up for him since he isn't at work today. He is filled with conflicting feelings—on the one hand enjoying his "freedom," on the other hand, apprehensive that someone will start ragging on him about work. As he sits on the porch puffing on a cigarette, the interviewees leave and John mumbles his goodbye to them.

At 3:30 Steve knocks off from work. He has told his boss that he needs to cook tonight and leave early to prepare an "approved meal". Having worked with C. School kids before, the employer knows that cooking is a diploma requirement and carries a degree of seriousness that few home economics courses hold for 17 year old males.

Steve enjoys cooking. As the eldest of five children, he learned a lot from his mom and has a particular predilection for cooking sweet pastries. He already has two "approved" meals and tonight could be his third. He is cooking lasagna—one with and one without meat.

Cooking here is a little more complicated than at home because of the staff. They have strange eating habits. Many of them are vegetarians and those that aren't still seem to attach too much importance to vegetables. Steve sets about preparing his meal in a competent and orderly fashion.

He does not get distracted when John cranks up AC/DC on the stereo at four o'clock, or when Joslyn and Kelly sit down at the counter and make suggestions about how they would cook his meal and how much they loved the way their mothers cooked lasagna.

Dinner time is a litmus test for the nature of the day at the School. The sun has gone down and won't come up for more than 12 hours. Ice crystals begin to form on the storm windows as the temperature drops and water vapor from cooking, showers, and coffee-making leaks out the interior windows.

Many students have never before sat down at an evening meal together. For others dinnertime has been pre-empted by T.V., booze, and parents on the second shift at work. On a good day students and staff all participate in the meal and stragglers hang around the dinner table for good talks and jokes. On a bad day people reject the meal, tension between people is palpable, dinner can be served and returned to the kitchen in under 15 minutes.

Ten minutes after he has finished washing the meal's dishes, John is in the living room talking with Cindy in a one to one meeting. He relaxes into the soft couch and waits for her to begin asking him questions about the day. Cindy looks at him directly and tells him that she is worried that he is going to get kicked out for going over the room and board limit, especially when he is not following up with his boss. She is quiet.

John feels both messages: that he is in danger of crossing one of the limits at the School, and that Cindy continues to care about him and his fate. Sometimes he gets the feeling that she wants him to graduate more than he does. But not today. John senses his own responsibility in this situation and realizes that he does not want to lose his relationship with Cindy. Not fully meaning it, he suggests that he will call the boss tonight. Their one to one ends fifteen minutes later after they have developed a proposal for Thursday's group rap to replace Kelly's food which he ate last week and to cook her breakfast on Saturday morning, taken a look at what John's options outside the C.School are, and compared their favorite Vietnam movies now in video.

At 7:30 classes begin. Tonight John has energy for class work. He is studying the war in Vietnam, which is his social studies class, and has had a chance to read parts of a few books, watch a video, read some poetry by soldiers, and struggle with some difficult pieces written by people who were in favor or against the war.

John's dad had seen active duty in Vietnam but never said much about it. It felt like a secret heavy weight which hung over the family. These classes were nothing like the ones at his old school. They were interesting and people were encouraging. There were no grades, just tests at the end of each course.

Although many activities at the Community School are counted as classes, for the five and one-half months a student is in residence, evening classes are the core of the formal academic curriculum. Each class begins with a group activity designed to interest, relax and concentrate students' and tutors' minds.

In conjunction with the School's teaching staff, from two to five volunteer tutors help facilitate classes every night of the week except for the Thursday group meeting. Tutors are generally local community members who enjoy working voluntarily with adolescents and have a particular interest in one academic field.

Classes are completely individualized and self-paced, and are concentrated on "skill building" for some students and on areas of personal interest in as many cases as possible. A series of competency tests measure successful completion of these classes. The intent of academics at the Community School is to revitalize the learning process for students: to help make them less afraid of making mistakes, to encourage them to take risks in thinking about things, to build their self confidence and trust in others so that they can engage in the genuine dialogue which is at the heart of all learning.

For many students the School is the first time any one has paid attention to how they felt about the material they were being asked to think about. It is the first time that they have been tested for a learning style and been regarded as a serious learner rather than someone with a "disability". It is the first time that people have expressed confidence in their abilities rather than disappointment in their performance.

Without grades, comparative test scores, or any interstudent measuring devices which often create barriers to learning, students more directly experience the intrinsic value of what they are studying.

Steve's math class tonight brings him to the shores of the hated ocean of fractions. He has always disliked math since third grade when he hated his teacher. Steve feels panicky about more failure in this subject. He sees math as one of the big obstacles to his graduation. For this reason he wants to get it over with. He wants to be done before he has started.

And now he is on the beach, staring at these crazy numbers which everyone always compares to pies. His tutor tonight is Dora, who knows that Steve is very uptight about math just as she was many years ago as a student. She assures him that he will get through it and pours a handful of Cheerios onto the table. They play with the cereal zeroes dividing them up into various groupings and subgroupings.

It's fun. The frothing, swirling, fractional ocean seems to subside a bit. Although he doesn't quite believe that he is really doing fractions, Steve continues because the problems seem clear enough and he can eat them whenever he finds the answer.

For a moment, the Cheerios remind Steve of breakfast and Kelly's comment about missing lunch food. He knows that John took some of her bologna last week and wonders how to get him to stop. If no one else does, Steve decides that he will raise it at group rap on Thursday. He has tried talking directly to John but it doesn't seem to have any effect.

Unlike the other academic classes, group rap, our seminar in self governance and interpersonal relations, is convened only once a week. It is attended by the entire school community. As many as 14 people nudge their way into the small living room to discuss and vote upon the week's community issues.

Discussion items may range from individual rule violations to special requests for privileges, to discussions of the affective side of the Community School process, to processing a conflict between two community members.

Originally we had hoped to have the community be completely self-governing and open to re-definition from day one. Over time it became apparent that we had to adopt some baseline rules and procedures which were not open to change by votes—the unalterable rules often designated by students as the "intolerable rules". These guidelines form a codified continuity which is useful due to the limited five and one half month stay of each student group.

What history the rules don't embody, the staff and former students carry as the School's "culture". One of the biggest elements missing from the School is the presence of committed older students in residence who can through example create a positive sense of identity with the program and its process. Former students who participate as current tutors, board members, seminar leaders, and helpers provide some of this modeling but probably not as effectively as "seniors" in a larger program might.

Claire, a graduate of eight terms ago, bounces in as classes break up. She has moved to the area from Portland, in part to be near the school, and in part, to be further from home. She is friends with several current students, has a car and apartment, and is currently enrolled in a therapeutic massage school.

Claire knows several of the current students and likes to keep in touch with the staff as she struggles with the vicissitudes of going to school and living on her own. She shares her apartment with a more recent graduate and has been asked to consider serving on the school's board of directors. At the moment however she is looking for someone to have a cup of coffee with at a local restaurant.

Steve decides to go out by himself and climb the mountain in back of the school. The night is too cold for people to be up there and he is eager to get away from the others for a while. Kris, one of the new students, asks him if he'd like some company and somewhat grudgingly he assents. His silence has been lost, but maybe they can get to know each other a bit better outside of the house.

John is agitated. His classes went fine but he constantly found himself wondering about his boss, and the $250 room and board limit. He knows of a party in town and is tempted to go out and do some drinking to clear his mind and numb the discomfort he is experiencing. He feels trapped and anxious.

Cindy checks in with him before she leaves at the end of her shift, and wishes him good luck tomorrow with his boss. Has he called yet? Does he have his alarm clock set? Did he speak to Steve about resetting it?

John isn't really hearing her, but is momentarily warmed by the sense that his future makes a difference—at least to her. "I've really gotta get out of this place; I'm gonna get kicked out anyhow, John blurts out inadvertently. Cindy slowly puts her knapsack down and, sitting down on the couch arm, asks him to explain.

While John is making a case for his inevitable demise in the program he also recalls the things he likes about it: the people, his special anger management class with Bob, the chance to earn some money....He stops as his thoughts bring him back to the problem at hand.

It is quiet for a moment in the music room until Steve and Kris boil up the stairs covered with snow from sliding down the lower slopes of Mt. Battie. "It's snowing," they shout over the trebly tone of the Van Halen tape which John has quickly clicked on. Cindy and John look out the window at the silently swirling snow quietly blanketing the street below. The last tutor is leaving the house, having stayed after classes to play chess with Aaron.

The house is filled with eight students and two teachers. It is the forty fifth day of the term. Students are reckoning with both their futures and their past in their attempts to come to terms with the present which is theirs at the school. The house begins to feel the power of the winds which are shifting to the southeast and have blown up on to the porch, making the sign rattle a bit and lose a couple of extra chips of paint.

Before leaving for the night, Cindy has to confer with Dora, one of the school's co-directors, who will sleep at the school tonight. She relays her impressions that John, although in deep water, is not convinced that swimming is necessary. It's been a long day, and she is tired and glad to be going home. She has been teaching since she awoke at 7 a.m. and it is now 10:30.

Our 16-hour visit to the Community School has drawn to a close. Learning here does not fit into neat packages. It comes as life is lived from day to day, and as we make the choices which give our lives shape. The teaching staff is on hand as much to facilitate these choices as it is to create a useful and relevant lesson plan. The emphasis on the personal, the intimate human encounter, results in an affective intensity and warmth which are singular.

It is our belief that by rekindling our students' faith in themselves and their capacity to trust others we have connected them to a more sustaining present and a more promising future.

The Community School, P.O. Box 555,
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ELEMENTS OF A SUPPORTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

by Emanuel Pariser

As teachers, we need to be attended to and supported in much the same way that we attend to our **students**. Systems looking for caretakers often do not know how to take care of them once they've hired them. Systems who want to have their students learn the value of choice, often don't offer many choices to their teachers.

1. **Autonomy and Choice Hiring**: Who decides who gets hired? How much input do you have in this?

To be effective, alternative programs need to be intimately involved in the hiring of new faculty members.

At the Community School we use group interviews to interview prospective staff. ALL STAFF are involved in this process.

Student Admissions: Who's in charge of who gets accepted? Alternative programs must be able to pick the students they feel they will work best with. If staff do not have that control they will feel hopeless and powerless.

At the Community School final decisions on acceptance involve ALL STAFF. Initial interviews are done by one staff, reviewed by two, and finally brought to a full staff meeting.

2. **Workplace decision making responsibility and authority**: How do decisions get made in your program? Who has responsibility for what?

By nature the most effective alternative programs and schools are relatively small. The necessity to specialize must always be subservient to the necessity of building a sense of community via a shared decision making process. If all faculty do not feel empowered, they will not last long, nor feel committed to the work.

At the Community School a full staff meeting is held once a week for five hours. All programmatic decisions are taken at this meeting.

3. **Consultancy and process**: How do decisions about individually challenging students get made in your program? The students who find the grey area in every rule; who seem to have great potential but are magnificent at not living up to it? How do staff conflicts, gripes, intra-faculty issues get addressed?

Alternative schools often work with students who have long histories of having been failed by their environments. They also often have "redeeming" social qualities which have allowed them to survive and adapt to whatever environment they find themselves in, so we get hooked. Along with bringing up the issue of powerlessness for us as staff when we find we cannot be immediately "helpful", working with these students may trigger our own unresolved, or painfully resolved issues; as a staff we may find ourselves unconsciously recreating these students' families' behavioral patterns. Even when we are successful there is an emotional price to pay sometimes, if unaddressed, this debt begins to fray staff relationships.

At the Community School, a consultant, with experience in family systems, and groups, works with the staff every week and facilitates our full school meeting on Thursday nights. As an "outsider" to the system, the consultant can "see" more clearly what is going on—especially between staff. This person is also less invested in individual students, and more concerned with the maintenance of the whole community.

Along with being a more "objective" observer, the consultant is there to make the staff process feel "safe" enough, for people to address thorny personal issues which have come up between staff, or have been triggered through staff-student interactions. For example: a student has been accepted who has an active eating disorder; a staff member has suffered from an eating disorder for many years, and is just now feeling successfully free of it. How will this staffer manage to keep this issue from interfering in his work with the student; where can he talk about the effect this situation is having on him? The consultant can lead this discussion and monitor the staff's adjustment to the situation.

Along with bringing an outside perspective, the consultant can also enliven discussions with relevant professional material relating to education, psychology, poetry — etc. which apply to a particular situation and in this way can help faculty bridge the gap between theory and practice.

4. **Supervision**: Who supervises your work? What form does this supervision take? Does the process feel regulatory or enhancing? Is it a process which attempts to fit your work into a certain pre-ordained mold, or which attempts to enhance and deepen your teaching?

Supervision in alternative settings should mirror the values the program holds with regards to its students. Strengths should be capitalized on; problems should be addressed directly and with the best interests of the student always kept in mind. The process should be fit to the individual; the teacher should constantly have the opportunity to be making decisions within the context of a larger decision making body, i.e. committee, department, etc.

At the Community School supervision takes place in three ways: first, the weekly staff meeting provides a forum in which faculty can and do discuss each other's work as well as their own. People's frustrations with their own and other's work are aired. second, every new staff is assigned a "mom" (a non-gender based role) who meets regularly with that staffer for approximately a year, until their feet and everything else has gotten suitably wet; third, staff evaluate each other's work formally, four times a year. The forms for these evaluations change depending on the inventiveness of the group which is organizing them. They tend to be a set of questions, which are responded to by each staff member in writing and shared in dyads; larger group issues, or unresolved conflicts are brought back to the group to work out.

5. **Developing "collegiality"** — a sense of intimacy and community among staff: What opportunities are there in your program for faculty to get to know each other? What activities have you done together which increase your effectiveness and enjoyment in working together?

No alternative program can last long without the sense among staff that they are involved together in a common endeavor. This sense of community arises out of the work and the chance to be with one another in non-task oriented situations.

At the Community School a staff-lunch proceeds each staff meeting. It is prepared by one faculty member on a rotating basis. On a regular basis staff get together to do something "fun", i.e. take a hike, watch a movie, etc. Once or twice a year, the entire staff and consultant has a "day of visioning" which is a retreat expressly designed to enhance group process and define mutually held goals for the upcoming six months. Finally each staff meeting begins with a "check-in" process that allows faculty to talk about what is going on in their lives especially as it relates to their mood at the moment.

How To Make Your Alternative Program Unsupportive: Design It to Answer No to These Questions

by Emanuel Pariser

Studies have shown that job dissatisfaction has more to do with negative working conditions and a perceived inability to affect change, than salary levels.

1. Does your program include any other staff besides yourself?
2. Do you have autonomy in choosing the students you will be serving?

3. Is it understood by the administration that "quick" results are unlikely?
4. Do you have a process for addressing inter-staff issues?
5. Is your faculty readily able to deal with serious differences among themselves?
6. Do you have a process for providing recognition to Staff??.
7. Is there a method of looking at how the "work" is bringing up critical personal issues for you, which may at times affect your effectiveness?
8. Do you feel you are working mostly as part of a team?
9. If you have supervision, has your supervisor ever been in your position?
10. Can you act quickly on your insights about your students (i.e.with regard to academics or life-areas)?
11. Do other teachers at your school know what you are doing?Do they support it?
12. Do you have frequent contact with your administrator? Does s/he understand the nature of your program?
13. Do you regularly have contact with other fellow faculty outside of work—"fun"????
14. Have you ever had a retreat just for the teachers in your alternative program????
15. Is your curriculum one which allows a maximum of personal input on the teacher's and student's part?
16. Do you ever have time to get together with educators in your field and brainstorm, problem solve, weep, etc.
17. Do you ever have the feeling that you are "all in the same boat" with your fellow faculty; i.e., that you share a common cause and concern and that you're working together on it?

The Community School was founded in 1973 by Dora Lievow and Emanuel Pariser. Over 200 students have been through the program and 70% have received their high school diplomas. Licensed by the Maine Department of Education and Cultural Services as a private alternative school, the program only accepts students who have left school and/or are in the process of dropping out.

As well as being the oldest alternative high school in Maine, it is the only one of its kind in the State, possibly in the nation. In an effort to "get the word out" on their experience and to encourage others to use what they believe they have learned in whatever way might be beneficial, the School assembled a National Advisory Board and gave Emanuel a working sabbatical to write and raise funds for the program. These pieces are a part of that effort, and it survives today against all odds! Let us hope it continues to do so—for surely, it is an important contribution to our understanding of adolescents!

FROM GADFLY TO MAINSTREAM: THE NEW ORLEANS FREE SCHOOL 20 YEARS LATER

by Bob Ferris

"...Nobody can know for certain what the right steps are in particular situations. Freedom is possible only after we commit ourselves to understanding the need to accept fundamental diversity."

—from *The Rapids of Change*, by Robert Theobald

We are sharing our 20 years of operation. As I reflect upon our journey over these years, I realize that the process has been long and difficult, though often rewarding. We started out with just an idea that became a reality. We now celebrate the adulthood of this idea.

Twenty years ago we were strong willed, full of energy, sure we were right and hell bent on changing the course of history. The only difference now is that we are older and no longer wild and crazy; we have become pensive and reflective. The innovator is no longer viewed as a law breaker and a rule bender, a rebel and a gadfly; rather, the innovator is now considered a law maker and a visionary, a thinker and a path finder.

When we started the Free School back in 1971 the key concept was that education must be relevant to the life of the child, that learning best occurs from the life involvement of the unique individual. I am proud today to be able to say that our program still offers an inquiry based, experiential and creative program. Instead of an emphasis on right answers, rigidity, routine and reproducing the known, the thrust of our program is to actively engage the students in the learning process, to get them personally involved in their developmental knowledge.

Twenty years ago we argued that if America was to truly revitalize our public schools, we must seek and establish small schools. No student must be allowed to go through our schools anonymously—unnoticed. In this great industrialized nation of ours, we must guarantee that education will be an intensely personal experience for every student. John Goodlad in his now famous book, *A Place Called School*, stated, "What are the defensible reasons for operating an elementary school of more than a dozen teachers and 300 boys and girls? I can think of none." (Goodlad, 1984) Neither can I. I am happy to report that the New Orleans Free School's enrollment is at 300 students.

Twenty years ago we took a strong position for offering a non-graded program. We argued then as now that grades do little for the bright students while all too often crush and obliterate the struggling student. Dr. W. Edwards Deming, pioneer of the Total Quality movement, stated this concept poignantly. "The prevailing system of management has destroyed our people. People are born with intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, dignity, curiosity to learn, joy in learning. The forces of destruction begin with the toddlers—a prize for the best Halloween costume, grades in school (my emphasis), gold stars—and on up through the university." (on the back cover of Peter Senge's The Fifth Discipline, 1990). Back in 1960 Marilyn Ferguson wrote, "In contrast to insects as someone said, human beings start out as butterflies and end up in cocoons." (*Aquarian Conspiracy*, 1960). What we at the Free School proffer is to provide the students a truly noncompetitive, cooperative enriched environment. We are offering children from New Orleans an environment which achieves academic progress without fear of traditional, harmful social comparisons which all too often lead to low self-esteem and self-image.

Grades are not as much of an issue today as they were back in 1971. The battle today is over standardized testing. Standardized tests are now so pervasive and powerful in our public schools, that they have greatly diminished the quality of our schools. William Glasser in his excellent little book, *The Quality School*, made the following statement:

> ...our boss-dominated educational establishment fails to recognize that quiet, conforming students who pass achievement tests that measure minimal knowledge and low-quality skills are not doing the high-quality schoolwork we need. Few of us may be able quickly or easily to define quality education, but most of us recognize that it is not what is measured by machine-scored achievement tests.

The emphasis all too often is not on the joy, excitement and/or challenge of learning; rather, it is on skill development, mastery of isolated skills, sequence of skills, test taking skills, etc. Curricula are no longer based on interests, needs or curiosity but are dominated by what is on the tests. While we as educators are told not to cheat on these tests, we are instructed to teach what is on the tests. The result of this over emphasis on achievement tests is that it narrowly defines curricula content in an age when we must be concentrating on the

> expansion of knowledge through individuals who have a love for learning, who know how to learn, and who have thought processes intricate enough to deal with the complexities of the modern world. Testing has now reversed the process of learning. Instead of using testing to facilitate and evaluate learning, we are now using testing to test our ability to teach the test. Instead of learning dictating testing, testing is determining learning. Instead of utilizing testing for human development, it has become the yardstick of human and/or program worth.`

The Report of the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy, "From Gatekeeper to Gateway: Transforming Testing in America," described this massive testing mania as "ominous." It reports the following:

> The Commission conservatively estimates that each year the equivalent of over 20 million school days is given over to students in the nation's elementary and secondary schools simply taking standardized tests. And this figure does not include time devoted to test preparation. Far too much valuable teacher and student time is consumed by mandated state and district-level testing.

Our children deserve better. I wish I could report to you that at the Free School we were free from the shackles of mandated standardized testing. I cannot. To refuse to give these tests would simply be suicidal. I can report that we are still able to offer our more experiential based curricula but that we must also concentrate on test scores. I can also proclaim that I am publicly and professionally against this misuse of testing and strongly urge a move toward performance based individual and school-based assessment with a concentration "...not on one fallible indicator but on a range of relevant evidence." (*Gatekeeper*, 1990).

Twenty years ago we were on the outside looking in. We were strongly attacking bureaucratic control of schools and we were critical of corporate America. Today we are an integral part of that bureaucratic system. Now, instead of a concentration on attacking bureaucracy, our efforts remain on the cutting edge of education but with an emphasis on serving as a model of responsive, humanistic education for mostly low income students. We have even joined corporate America. We now have two business partners. The Chateau LeMoyne Holiday Inn has supported our school for the past few years. We recently formed a partnership with the law firm Middleberg, Riddle and Gianna. For their first program they are adopting our 6th grade "Teach For America" teacher in helping her to develop a law curriculum program for her 6th grade students. We have come to the realization that with society's complex and entrenched problems, only together can we make a difference.

Twenty years ago the Free School strongly proclaimed local control for schools at the school-site. Today I can proudly state that on the front burner of educational reform is moving power from the statehouse and the boardroom to the schoolhouse. John Chubb and Terry Moe's book *Politics, Markets and America's Schools* concluded that a major stumbling block to real school reform and/or success is a lack of autonomy. They proposed a plan of choice—one that cuts across the public-private school line—one which they argued moves schools from control by politics and bureaucracy to control by the marketplace.

Our large bureaucratic public school structure forces compliance and convergency on us all. This political and bureaucratic structure forces schools to be "compromised organizations," to use the words of the recent RAND study titled "High School With Character." The isolated few schools which work because of wealth and/or practices notwithstanding, the public school political structure's message is "This is the way you do it." School-site personnel are reduced to mental dwarfs forcing the best and the brightest to crawl into a hole and sacrifice principles and thoughts, leave the system or spend a life in the lonely position of being an adversary. It is no surprise that Peter Senge in his brilliant book, *The Fifth Discipline*, made the following statement: "I came to realize why business is the focus of innovation in an open society. Despite whatever hold past thinking may have on the business mind, business has a freedom to experiment missing in the public sector..."

The message of Chubb and Moe's study is that schools must be given the freedom to experiment. A significant new paradigm is emerging throughout the United States and the world today. We must change our schools from convergent compliancy to divergent creative living organizations. Chubb and Moe are not talking about the rhetoric of change. School-based management, shared decision making, empowerment are all buzz words of the bureaucracy. Chubb and Moe are suggesting moving the power in empowerment to the schoolhouse. Even the RAND study concludes that the powers to be must "... agree to permit schools to manage themselves...Improvement of an organization that has been crushed by regulation, contracts, artificial incentive schemes, and reporting requirements cannot be accomplished by more of the same."

Do we have to sink the boat in order to rock it? I do not know. I do know that we must pop the cork to drink champagne. I also know that 20 years is a long time. Let's drink the champagne.

Thank you for your support all these years.

Robert M. Ferris, Ed.D, Principal, New Orleans Free School,
3601 Camp Street, New Orleans, LA 70115

If you would like to have a first-hand look at Bob's school, it has been beautifully filmed in action by Dorothy Fadiman in her award-winning video, "Why Do These Kids Love School?" We reproduce Bob's address with thanks.

JUDITH RANDALL ON THE MEETING SCHOOL:

NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN TEENAGERS

by Judith Randall, Pendle Hill, June, 1986

For six years I was a houseparent and teacher at The Meeting School, a small Quaker boarding school on a farm in southern New Hampshire. As a houseparent, four to six high school students lived with me and my family. When I came to the job, the only experience I had had with teenagers was a semester of student teaching at a public high school in southern Michigan four years before, and my own teenage years—which at that point I would have just as soon forgotten. The school is modeled after the Quaker meeting and after the family; our task was to 'make a family' in the nine months we had together—and to teach high school classes, cooperate with our colleagues in running the school, and provide knowledge of and models of Quaker faith and practice. I had been a Quaker for about a year and a half when I arrived, married for two years, and had a daughter not quite one year old. How much did I know, I wondered, about teaching, about family, about Quakerism?

The years were challenging, frustrating, exhilarating, painful, wrenching sometimes—and full of growth. There were times when I wanted to flee, many times when I swore 'this is my last year,' other times when I knew very deep down that this place was filling me and changing me and un-molding me in ways that were exactly what I wanted. What I realize now was that I HAD to rely on God—and to live out my Quaker faith every day—in order to live and work there. And over the course of the six years, I gradually grew in my ability to do that. When I came away, I felt a sense of accomplishment, but not of completion; a feeling of work well done, but not as well done as it might have been had I somehow known more, especially about the spiritual life and development of people aged 13-19. I knew from my experience that teenagers HAVE a developing spiritual life—buried or quiet in some, blatant and chaotic in others, powerfully centered in others. I lived with their denials of God, their poltergeists, their psychic sensitivities, their verbal and non-verbal rejection of childhood church teaching. In some there was tender embrace and earnest practice of Quaker ways. Always there were long-into-the-night conversations about relationships, love, death, reincarnation, world religions. There was Bible reading and the study of meditation, spiritual healing, spiritual apathy. And endless, endless questions and challenges about my own beliefs. All this and cows to be milked, meals to be cooked, lessons to be prepared and studied, meetings to attend.

The search for information about teenagers' spiritual development, the desire to learn to nurture that tender place, and my own sense of incompletion, of something not finished about my time or task there, have propelled me into this project.

The Teenage Spirit

Patricia Carini, founder of The Prospect School in Bennington, Vt., and long-time observer of children, calls adolescence a time of awakening to new life, to consciousness, to I AM. It is a unique perspective, not merely a stage in getting to adulthood. Education for all of us, she believes, is founded on value (not values)—on that experience which provides a sense of worth or enjoyment. For children this value is seen in wonder; for adolescents, the emblem of value is aspiration—the urge to make a mark on the world, a contribution. The teenager wants to discover his or her vocation, or calling. The desire to be part of a community, to be a member, to belong, is strong. Relationship is also of central importance: I to myself, I to others—friends, confidants—and the exploration of intimacy boundaries. The exploration of sexuality—what it means to be a man or woman—is an important task. Carini sees all these as part of the development of spirit in teenagers.[1]

Annette Hollander agrees: "Adolescence is an age of spiritual hunger and a quest for meaning."[2] With the developing power of abstract thought, Hollander states, the adolescent for the first time can ponder such intangibles as life and purpose. Formal operational thinking, as Piaget calls it, with the ability to reflect on one's own thinking and ways of experiencing invites one mentally to step outside the flow of life's stream.[3] Thus, the "self consciousness" of adolescence means more than "awkward."

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[1] Carini, Patricia, Prospect School, N. Bennington, VT, from lecture notes at "The Adolescent Years," a workshop at Pendle Hill sponsored by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Committee on Education, April 14-16, 1986.

[2] Hollander, Annette, *How to Help Your Child to Have a Spiritual Life.*, A & W Publishing (New York: 1980), p. 236.

[3] Fowler, James, *Stages of Faith*, Harper & Row (San Francisco; 1981), p. 152.

Psychosynthesis teaches that adolescence can best be understood if we consider the child to be experiencing a surge of spiritual energy from the higher self at the same time that he or she is dealing with new rushes of sexual energy.[4]

In the Jungian view, we are "reborn" whenever there is the death of an old attitude and the birth of a new consciousness. The spiritual "crisis" of the adolescent is, Jung concludes, programmed by biological necessity: death of the dependent child attitudes, rebirth as a psychological adult.[5] Thus adults might see themselves as midwives in the lives of teenagers.

James Fowler placed adolescents in the third of six "stages of faith;" a stage in which structuring the world and ultimate environment by the expectations and judgments of OTHERS is predominant. Thus the adolescent's religious hunger is for a God who knows, accepts, and confirms the self deeply, and who serves as an infinite guarantor of the self with its forming myth of personal identity and faith.[6] For stage 3 with its beginnings in adolescence, authority is located externally to the self. Fowler continues: "In the interpersonal world of Stage 3 faith, THEIR expectations help us to focus ourselves and assemble our commitments of values, but here is always the danger of becoming permanently dependent upon and subject to what Sharon Parks calls the 'tyranny of the they.'"[7]

Hollander reports brain research which identifies spiritual development in adolescence. Those parts of the brain responsible for parental care do not come into full operation until the hormonal changes of adolescence occur. As a result of this research, Paul MacLean suggests that this may be a critical period for the development of altruism and empathy, and recommends that adolescents be given the responsibility for ministering to human suffering.

These then are some of the qualities of spiritual life and development in adolescence: awakening, aspiration, discovery of vocation, membership in community, quest, life purpose, self consciousness, relationship, authority, altruism and empathy. How do these qualities appear in real life?

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[4] Ibid., Hollander, p. 241.

[5] Ibid., p. 243.

[6] Ibid., Fowler, p. 153.

[7] Ibid., p. 154.

Elisabeth's Adolescence

Elisabeth is in her 30's, a staff member for a Quaker organization which reaches out to non-Quakers. She is about to be married. She has helped develop 'Gifts Workshops'—workshops which draw out the spiritual gifts of participants and provide encouragement for them to exercise those gifts. Elisabeth's adolescence was, she says, 'the best period of my life, next to the present.' At 14, Elisabeth met her 'first Quaker,' an American Friends Service Committee workcamp leader in California. She became involved in program planning with him, meeting once a month with a committee of students and adults, planning programs for every other month, and a week-long conference for teenagers in the summer on 'the whys of life.' This group made real decisions, students alongside a group of 'fairly creative, innovative adults.' Elisabeth says, 'Nowhere had I run into adults who treated me as an equal, and I gave my heart to it totally. Some of us are still friends.' The Quaker leader knew that 'being available was being AVAILABLE.' She continues, 'If kids smoked dope, he'd stay up all night talking through the issues. We never talked about spiritual experiences or God—we talked about relationships, dope, and so forth, and in that language we were talking about the spiritual.' He was also the first to name Elisabeth's gift in music. 'Once you've had that experience (of community), you go on looking for it and creating it. The quality of community and closeness of community is what's life-giving for us all.[8]

This teacher's recognition and affirmation, the worth and power Elisabeth felt as part of the committee, and the experience of community she had, led her to develop her 'gift work' through the Church of the Savior in Washington, DC, and now with a group of her contemporaries through the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Spiritual Nurture of Teenagers at School, at Home

What features of Elisabeth's experience in adolescence can help us understand ways to nurture teenagers' spiritual growth? She had a relationship with an adult who provided an experience of community, who listened, who was available. She felt safe to explore questions closest to her heart and to express herself. He recognized and encouraged her gifts. He was personally involved in work that was meaningful and fulfilling to him. She did actual work and made real decisions with adults and peers who respected her contributions and treated her as an equal. The group was making a contribution to the wider community.

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[8] Interview with Elisabeth Dearborn, May 3, 1986.

"What can we do as (teachers and) parents to help channel the teenager's spiritual energies? As usual, the most important thing is simply to recognize and respect their quest."[9] This is Annette Hollander's simply stated answer. How do we do this?

Patricia Carini offers many concrete suggestions within the educational setting. She suggests providing opportunities for young people to be members of a community, to make an actual contribution and to be recognized for it. To foster wholeness, we can provide many ways of learning and discovering across subjects, make sure that students feel safe to speak in school, and alternate between teaching the whole and the parts of any given body of knowledge, remembering all the while that there's not AN answer to any question. Carini suggests that knowledge is "soaked up" and that returning again and again to that which we have "learned" gives us the opportunity to absorb the knowledge with a new perspective, because WE are never the same. Talking to people who are doing their work is quite important, especially hearing about the ideas and the adventure in the work — its "spirit." Like Hollander, Carnini says we must engage WITH students on their question—their quest; that teacher and student be fellow adventurers, and that teacher's primary function be to get the learning started, not to bring the students to a predetermined goal. Finally, Carini stresses the importance of the arts in every field of learning. The arts are, she says, "the root and well of the discipline. Offered together, they provide mental formulation and artistic expression."[10]

In his book, *Youth and Adult: the Shared Journey toward Wholeness*, Frank David Cardelle describes a program of teaching and learning which he calls the REAL program: Reality, Evaluation, Application, Living. It is a "complementary process to balance the usual academic curriculum" which includes six core areas: individual survival and growth, interpersonal relationships, family life awareness, human sexuality, health and well-being, and career orientation and selection. He states, 'The REAL program is one model for working with young people in a partnership for learning. It seeks to encourage the development of positive, supportive, and trusting bonds between teacher and students. It seeks to foster meaningful and relevant learning for young lives lived in the real world... It is about the struggle of adolescents to find meaning in their lives, day-to-day with peers and adults as partners.'[11]

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[9] Ibid., Hollander, p. 241.

[10] Ibid., Carini.

Nathaniel Needle, founder and director of New Salem Academy in New Salem, Massachusetts, shares these views of 'partnership in learning' as a way to spiritual growth. His school is based on a community model of education, rather than a 'corporate model' which he sees at work in most public schools, and which prepares students to enter the corporate world. In both content and method, he feels the corporate model is antithetical to spiritual growth. He says, 'It keeps most people's minds in a very narrow track, limited by role and position in the hierarchy, with specific goals aimed for which are narrow, directed, and planned out in advance.' Things that speak directly to the heart of the individual would sidetrack people from these goals. Current opinion, he believes, favors 'sticking to academics' and divesting schools of 'heart centered' learning. At New Salem, the goals are different: the development of the individual within the community is the primary goal. Students are provided with opportunities to share their school work, and to share feelings, ideas, plans, and everyday life events with their peers and with their teachers. The development of discipline and values (without putting them into the context of a belief system) are inherent in community life, especially in the community meeting, where one student must be quiet while others speak, where one student must adjust his or her needs to what others need, where decisions by consensus mean everyone's opinion is valued and shared. Discipline is also developed in activities in nature—'the primary source of spirituality for young people' in Nat's opinion—including Outward Bound-type 'survival' activities. Discipline here comes from an individual in encounter with nature, not from someone 'yelling and telling you what to do.' Inner and outer discipline are both being taught. A third component of New Salem's community model of education is the awareness, acknowledgment, and celebration of interconnections through rituals in community living, such as the use of silence before and during meetings, and in nature, especially illuminating the cycles of nature and of life and death. Nat also suggests that the concept of 'duty'—to peace, humanity, a better world—be fostered; and NSA engaged in community service projects to this end.

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[11] Cardelle, Frank David, *Youth and Adult: The Shared Journey Toward Wholeness*, Four World Development Project, University of Lethbridge (Lethbridge, Alberta: 1986), p. 57.

Teenagers often exhibit strong resistance. I wondered how this resistance might be used in the service of spiritual growth, and how it was handled in the model community.

A lot of resistance is passive and unconscious and comes from an enormous amount of anger. Kids are harassed by parents, they're always being told they're not OK, that they don't come up to anybody's standards, and none of the adults likes the fact that they resist—the kids know they're not going to WIN in an out and out open fight. The adults hold all the cards. So they engage in passive, unconscious resistance. As an adult, instead of trying to manipulate kids out of their anger, or to get them to do what you want them to do, the best approach is to move the passive unconscious resistance to active conscious resistance. This a step UP in spiritual and emotional growth. It requires a safe environment for them to express themselves, and the encouragement of the student when he or she reaches the point of saying, I DON'T LIKE THIS! Why am I here? What am I doing? Suddenly they have to confront the reality: 'I can't do everything I want. No, I don't like this. But in order to get some other things that are important to me, I may have to compromise. I may have to do some things I don't like.' And suddenly that's OK if it's the student's choice.[12]

Nat, like Patricia Carini and Frank Cardelle, cautions that the adults have to shift their agenda, too, to let go of requiring predetermined outcomes in any given class.

This 'community model' encourages a shift in the location of authority—from an external source to an internal one, along with a taking of responsibility for oneself in relation to the community. James Fowler speaks of spiritual growth in terms of this movement from his Stage 3 to Stage 4. One of the hallmarks of Stage 3, you will remember, is that authority within the self takes place, as does the movement away from the value system one has assumed from others, to the development of one's own value system. Fowler found that a 'considerable number of the ADULTS interviewed—both men and women—can best be described by the patterns of Stage 3, and that for a genuine move to Stage 4 to occur, there must be an INTERRUPTION OF RELIANCE ON EXTERNAL SOURCES OF AUTHORITY. The expectations, advice, and counsel of others will be submitted to an internal panel of experts who reserve the right to choose and who are prepared to take responsibility for their choice.'[13]

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[12] Interview with Nathaniel Needle, April 8, 1986.

Friends Schools and Spiritual Nurture

...Shift the location of authority from external to internal. It is in this crucial area of spiritual development that Friends schools have a particular opportunity to nurture spiritual growth to the extent that they rely on Friends' testimonies and the Meeting for Worship and Business in the educational process.

Friends schools began in George Fox's time (mid 1600's) in England. In her book by the same name, Helen Hole states that Fox intended for pupils to be instructed in 'things civil and useful.' From the beginning, females as well as males were to be educated in practical areas as well as in 'those things which had to do with being citizens and participants in civilization.'[14] The number of schools grew in England and the colonies in order to open children to the values which these early Friends had so recently experienced, and keep them from the corruption of 'worldly ways, manners, fashions, and language.' (LYM, 1690). In addition, 'since leadership was entrusted to the laity, not to a specifically educated clergy, it was of first importance that the members be able to read and understand the Bible and express themselves clearly and coherently in English.'[15] Finally, Friends believed that 'education must consist of a search for the appropriate answer of God to all human situations.'[16] All the schools featured community of a special kind, based on the concept of family, and included attendance at meeting 2-3 times a week. The school family also included non-academic staff members. Practical work was shared—no task was too degrading and it was felt that all labor had dignity; thus each person had a place where he or she belonged. Each learned to feel at home with Quaker ways—silent worship, decision making according to the sense of the meeting, plain dress, plain language.[17]

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[13] Ibid., Fowler, p. 178-79.

[14] Hole, Helen, *Things Civil and Useful: a Personal* View of Quaker Education, Friends United Press (Richmond, 1978), p. 5.

[15] Ibid., p. 7.

[16] Ibid.

Besides community, simplicity was another characteristic of these early Friends schools, including the emphasis on simple, direct statements and integrity in all one's doings, as well as simplicity of lifestyle.[18]

In matters of discipline, as time went on a student's individual honor and respect for him or her to preserve order was relied upon. Responsibility for discipline was shared with the students.

Probably the most important religious influence of all was the impression of being surrounded by a religiously centered community: a life pervaded by a sense of the Divine was the goal of many in that community, and students became, consciously or unconsciously, aware of it.[19]

Thus early Friends schools nurtured Friends' religious life. Today, however, most students and teachers in Friends schools are not Friends. Helen Hole acknowledges that we no longer impose a specific set of Quaker values or a particular pattern of life.[20] She raises these questions:

> Can we still, however, to some degree make our campuses places in which a student can find a place to stand, a time in which to pause, while he (or she) hopefully begins to discover what is deeply relevant to him? Can we help him discover his spiritual roots, so that, in college or later, he can find himself as a whole person who can affirm values in which he believes and to which he is committed?[21]

Helen Hole believed that at the core of this process is a concerned and committed faculty, whether Quaker or non-Quaker, with whom the student comes in contact: people who care, and that the Quaker way of decision-making be central—this process which moves the external authority to an internal one.

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[17] Ibid., p. 14-15.

[18] Ibid., p. 18.

[19] Ibid., p. 35.

[20] Ibid., p. 35.

[21] Ibid.

At a recent workshop for students and teachers at Friends Schools entitled, "Developing the Spiritual Life of Your School," Elisabeth Watson asked these questions:

What do you believe?
How do you live that?

Her message is that living what you believe is central to spiritual life—and that in Friends Schools we can aid spiritual growth by helping students examine what they believe and in what ways they are living those beliefs.

Healing the Teenager Within

Often when I ask friends about their teenage years, they roll their eyes, groan, and brush off my question with a wave of their hand: "Worst years of my life...glad when they were over...a horrible time." It seems that most of us would like to cut those years out of our memories, like some diseased organ in our bodies. And yet, just as with an organ that is diseased, in order to be whole and healthy, we need to pay attention to the illness, get help, and do what we find necessary in order to heal. I believe this is true of our attitudes toward our own adolescence as well. This unfinished business seems to be the source of my feeling of incompletion about my years at The Meeting School.

For teachers of teenagers, it is important for the healthy teaching of young people that we adults take care of our adolescent business ourselves, and not try to work it out by unconsciously projecting it onto the young people in our lives. Furthermore, a teacher and a young person can EACH grow spiritually if they see their relationship as a "shared journey toward wholeness."[22] It is true that the teenage years, because they are full of rapid growth and change, are not easy. Growth is occurring in body, mind, and spirit, and the emotional feelings that accompany growth are unfamiliar and disconcerting. For the teenager, nothing is certain anymore—all the learning and trusting of childhood must be tested, all the values and guidance and control that adults have offered is questionable, the society and culture are holding up so many mores and ways of being that choices must be made. The threat of nuclear destruction or the

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[22] Ibid., Cardelle, title.

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slow death of the natural environment foster feelings of powerlessness. 'I feel the earth move under my feet,' sings Carole King, and surely this is how the teenage years feel. Stress results from rapid change and pressure to decide; the teenage years are almost never without stress. Some young people don't make it through—the teenage suicide rate is staggering. Others try to leap over the teenage years and into adulthood via such things as early pregnancy, excessive consumerism, and drug and alcohol use. Others simply 'drop out,' abandoning their creative selves, turning toward whatever pleasures and possibilities present themselves in the next moment.

But by its very nature, this period of rapid growth and change, this stressful time, can be an opportunity for deep spiritual learning. I have come to experience such chaotic times in my own life as signals that a new phase of spiritual growth is taking place. This perspective on adolescence is not widely held, and for good reason: the body changes, the changes in abilities in learning, the emotional swings, the intense focus on relationships, all fill the days and hours of teenagers' lives. And adults who have not explored and embraced their own adolescence are busy just keeping up with these outward changes.

There ARE adults who have moved through many of the growth tasks that adolescence offers and are able to 'be with' teenagers in a clear way. And there are adults—many more— who know they have 'unfinished business' from their adolescent years, yet who are willing and able to live and work alongside their teenage students, getting support from other adults as they do so, and reaching insights which free them from repeating self-defeating behavior and behavior which is growth-inhibiting for their teenage students.

However, for many teachers, the years are just too painful to look back on, or they have no notion that to do so would benefit them and their students. It is not an easy task, but completing unfinished work from any age can help us as we seek to live a whole and holy life, serving God and one another. To ignore our teenage years, to put them behind us as if they were finished, means only that the issues will rise again and again throughout our adult lives until we pay attention, get some help, and do what we find necessary in order to heal.

How to Nurture a Teenager

As the process of writing this paper has unfolded over the weeks, I have understood new things about teenage spiritual development. I have learned how I WAS helping to nurture the spiritual life of teenagers at The Meeting School, and how I might better have done so. I have relived some of the events of my own teen years, and have seen them in a new light in the context of working with teenagers and as stepping stones to my own spiritual and emotional growth. A sense of completion is near.

Now, I offer straight advice from the years of teaching and learning that The Meeting School provided, and from the subsequent reflection on that experience that a year at Pendle Hill has provided.

Listen. Spend time, one to one. It doesn't have to be a LOT of time—maybe walking down the hall between classes, or during a break while working together one-to-one on a project, or driving a student somewhere in the car. If your school life doesn't provide for these occasional one-to-one encounters, consider the reasons why, and how they might be built in to the life of the school, or into your own life as a teacher there. Parents have more opportunities for these encounters—doing the dishes, driving to the myriad places that teenagers need to be taken, or during that once-in-awhile moment after a meal when the teenager isn't for some reason rushing off to do something else. Parents too, however, need to watch for these moments and take the opportunities for such listening when they arise. Just listen. She may not SAY anything. But listening with the spirit's ear is a kind of listening prayer that invites a person to think or speak or mull over. It provides a quiet space for that to happen in. If she does talk, continue to listen—both to her and to your own Inward Guide, so that when you speak — you are speaking from your center, from your heart, from the Spirit's voice, no matter how mundane or 'adolescent' the topic.

Share. Listen for your own feelings and thoughts rising from within in response to what's being said and share them AS YOUR FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS, not as the way things are, or pronouncements of fact. Listen for what YOU have to learn from what's being said, and share what you've learned with the person. Let him know that he is adding value to your life, just by being with you and saying what's on his mind. You may not always feel contributed to, but keep asking to be shown what you can learn from this person and this situation.

Reflect. If you hear, in your close listening, a pattern or thread through what's being said, reflect it to her. 'It sounds like you might be saying...' And let that settle. Let it go. She may not accept it. YOU let it go. Reflect her questions and decisions back to her and encourage her to look within.

Express. If you feel angry or frustrated or preoccupied, SAY SO. You don't have to go into a lot of detail. Just let him know the feeling and that you're working on something and that you don't want him to think that you're angry (for example) with him. Express your joy. Spread it all around. And your contentment.

Let them know what to expect. And that it may change. Whether in the classroom or at home or in a youth group of any kind, letting young people know what's about to happen AND reminding them at the same time that 'anything can happen' helps prepare them for all possibilities.

Nurture yourself. If you wish to help nurture teenagers, you must nurture yourself. Give yourself time and space and aloneness, and playful, joyful experiences and community and continuing learning opportunities. Receive from others. Receive from young people. These feed you, and you feed them. Without nurture, you will burn out. With nurture, you can grow in love and joy.

Consciously explore and re-encounter your own teenage years. Otherwise you will re-enact the 'stuck' places with students over and over again until you see that it's your stuff, not theirs. Results in a lot of pain for everyone. It may be painful for you to re-connect with your teenage years, but in that kind of pain, growth can come.

Remember they're recently children, not yet adults. They'll show both child and adult, even from one minute to the next. Take a deep breath and let them be where they are.

When the conversation moves in that direction, talk to them about sex. And drugs. And relationships. And the thing they show the most zest for—be it rock music, math, a relationship, or clothes. Take it in and let it go. And keep listening for the lessons for you in the situation.

Provide empowering opportunities. Opportunities for them to engage in real work toward a peaceful world, in the family, at school, in the community.

Do you recall nurturing adults or 'spirit' teachers who were part of your teenage world? How and where did that nurturing take place? Encourage young people to spend time with the nurturing adults in their lives, and guide them toward such persons all their lives.

Attend to your own spiritual growth. If you wish to nurture spiritual growth, you must be growing spiritually yourself. Consider joining or creating a small group of people who share your wish to grow spiritually. Consider finding a spiritual friend or spiritual director. Discover your spiritual gifts, and uncover your response-ability to use them. Exercise them. Look deeply into the religion you feel most drawn to. Find a place of retreat and go there as often as you feel you can. Develop your relationship with God or the Inward Guide or the Inward Teacher or Nature or whatever you choose to call that which is greater than yourself.

Judith Randall and her husband Chuck were houseparents and teachers for many years at the Quaker-based Meeting School in Rindge, New Hampshire (which is still alive and well!). When they went to Pendle Hill, Pennsylvania, we were very happy to have this fine article as evidence that Judith was still as deeply concerned with the lives of adolescents as ever.

NAT NEEDLE ON NEW SALEM ACADEMY:

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS - WHO ARE WE NOW?

by Nathaniel Needle, Headmaster of
New Salem Academy, New Salem, Massachusetts

A good friend, Headmaster at an independent school in the Berkshires, suggested that our school had a promising program, but that the word 'alternative' in our literature was holding us back. Too many bad connotations, he said. A fellow teacher at our school, pondering our enrollment difficulties, was musing over whether it had been a flat-out mistake to call ourselves an 'alternative' school. He said it probably led folks to think we dealt primarily with 'problem' teenagers.

For those who have stuck by the 'alternative' philosophy over the years, the memories are vivid. When money was everywhere and the liberal, experimental mood was pervasive, public schools, caught up in the spirit (pressure?) of 'reform,' created 'alternative programs' with high aims. Idealistic teachers enlisted in droves. Enmeshed as these programs were in the culture of the educational bureaucracy, they quickly came to fill a niche as 'dumping grounds' for students with a wide variety of 'disabilities' as far as the system was concerned. Teachers faced with something they hadn't bargained for burned out, and the programs, still doing their best but having no magic solutions for such a gamut of problems, gained a second-class reputation befitting the ostracized nature of their student populations.

Well, times changed, nobody was getting the bang they wanted for their buck, and we stopped coddling delinquents. The 'alternative programs' either went out of business or became honest 'special education' outfits, leaving a tiny handful of public schools (and a somewhat larger handful of private schools) which clung to their original ideals and to the now badly-tarnished word 'alternative.'

Over the next decade the 'survivors' have hung in there, and have been joined by a smattering of newcomers. (The modern way of seeking alternatives to the 'system,' however, has seemed increasingly to be to simply keep your kids out of school.) Those schools that have joined the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools keep asking themselves what it means to be an alternative school in the 1980's, and hopefully, beyond.

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One thing it seems to mean is the opportunity to create a whole new culture, a different way of being with young children, a different organization, a different set of structures and procedures. These differences have little to do with the notion of "reform."

They don't involve tinkering with more colorful textbooks or creative curriculum to raise scores and improve morale. They certainly don't involve giving teachers "merit pay" to spur them to longer hours. The schools are small islands of unique life in society's ocean of institutional sameness. To outsiders coming in, they sometimes seem a bit like foreign countries. And yet, when they choose to, they keep selected mementos from the mainstream (our school even has bells!).

Things are not created in reaction to the "outside" world, but as part of an ongoing experiment to find out "what works."

This sense of being a culture, with common values and experiences, gets stronger when we gather from all over the region or the country with students, teachers and parents to share our joys and our dilemmas. There is no longer the panicked desire to be as different as possible from traditional schools. Practices that were once instituted out of sheer ideological fervor have long since been soaked in the cold water of experience. And yet so much is different: school governance, relations among faculty, lifestyles, things we take for granted.

When we interview new students, or hire new staff, we are reconnected to our sense of what "alternative" means. It means that year in, year out, we provide an option, a genuine choice. No, you don't have to put up with another year of hall passes or pressure to succeed in a particular way or take drugs. Yes, you can question and criticize the values of "mainstream" America. And you don't have to.

Just be yourself, or rather, find yourself, here. If all we do is provide living proof that there is more than one kind of education, maybe that's enough.

Another sense that I notice we share is that of being "dug in" for the long haul without being "entrenched" in our ways. We're not scrambling for media attention or rushing to adopt the latest educational fad. The screaming and yelling going on in the news seems to pass us by. Yet we are ferociously engaged in our own process of self-questioning: How much student power in our school? Why? What actions can we take to promote non-violent ways of dealing with each other? What does "productivity" mean, and what is its value in a learning community? Where should we go for our next all-school trip? What can we do about hunger? Illiteracy in adults? South Africa?

It's a hallmark of an alternative school that it asks these questions as a whole community of teachers, students and parents.

Another benefit of not being in the news much is the chance to develop the feeling of patience, of being part of an ancient historical stream of people who promote unity with nature, non-violence, equal opportunity for people of all nations and races, non-materialism, and the miracle of human development and personal change through reason and love. We do this knowing that we are always struggling with our own egos, our own tendency to split the world into 'them' and 'us.'

The best part about our work is, we're not martyrs. We love it, we're having a blast! The daily struggle is just part of the tour. I just hope that when the tide turns and everybody's a liberal again (or whatever they're calling it at that point), we can hold onto that sense of patience, and not let the media make up an identity for us which we believe.

This being patient and 'dug in' doesn't mean we are inactive! We certainly fight: for justice in Central America, for protection of our environment, for peaceful solutions to conflict on this planet. And we are more and more an important part of our communities, whether we are in inner-city Chicago, on a quiet rural New England street, or on a commune in Texas. Our neighbors have come to count on us to be involved in issues important to their well-being.

Our values are long-enduring, not easily blown hither and yon by shifts in the political weather. Yet as educators, we also have a duty to continually question our values, and see that our students have an opportunity to question them as well. After all, everyone believes that he or she is acting in the name of what is right, even President Botha or the Ayatollah Khomeini. How can we be so sure 'we' are 'right' and 'they' are 'wrong'? This questioning is itself one of our dearest values, a companion to our reverence for nature and our desire for peace and justice among men and women, boys and girls.

As strong as these values are, and as much as alternative schools use them to define themselves, we forget them all the time. Adults, from habit and convenience, begin to treat kids as objects to be manipulated rather than educated. Or we accept behavior from students that we would non-violently resist in an adult, thus assuming that our 'adult' values are too good for them. We also forget our values when we treat our lives as most other people treat theirs: just something to get through until their next meal, the next paycheck, the next vacation.

But then something causes us to remember what we are doing. Over the years, we have set up little tripwires within our schools which remind us of the wonder of our jobs: an all-school meeting, a class in the woods, a hug from a fellow teacher, another alternative schools conference. Then we catch our breath, hit ourselves on the head, try to figure out how we got here, and go back to this amazing work.

We keep on trucking on this long, endless alternative school path, encouraging the growth of young human beings, who, just maybe, from their experiences in our schools, will grow to be a little more open, compassionate, wise and free than we are. It's an ennobling task for all of us to be what a Baha'i friend of mine once called "layers of seeds, heralds of the dawn."

Nat's own beloved New Salem Academy, in the small New England town of New Salem, Massachusetts, was a magnificent exemplar of Nat's own integrity and loving values. It did the job it was intended to do throughout the all too few years of its floruit, and its demise is still mourned. Nat is now at the heart and soul of Pat Montgomery's Clonlara in Ann Arbor, Michigan, still "hanging in" on his path.

JOHN POTTER ON SOMERSET SCHOOL:

WELCOME ADDRESS

by John Potter

Somerset *Small Schools* Conference

The response to this conference by small schools has far exceeded my expectations. Each day as registration forms come in, more schools were added to the list. Somehow, the idea of this conference has struck a chord. Welcome to all of you. I hope that by the end of the day we have a better picture of what we can do for ourselves, for each other and for society.

Raoul Naroll an anthropologist, in his exhaustive and extensively documented book, *The Moral Murder*, views the human race as having stopped evolving 10,000 years ago. Ever since then it has used its wit to adapt its environment to its needs. As hunter-gatherers, humans worked in bands of between 10-100 people. Naroll's view is that genetic evolution stopped at about the same time; even though we have organized since into villages, towns, cities and countries, we still depend on the small groups we form via family, church, school or other associations for our fundamental sense of self and security. He holds that in situations around the world, where an individual's connection with such a group is weakened, the probability increases of personal crises such as depression, divorce, suicide and abuses of various kinds. In his view the family, or the extended family of relatives and friends, with common interests and beliefs, is the key unit to the healthy development of young adults.

We have become a society of institutions. A newborn can reasonably expect to enter a day care center, and on to an elementary school, to a junior high school, to a high school, maybe to a college, to a large corporation, to a retirement community, to a nursing home, finally to a graveyard. In all situations he will be just one among several hundred if not thousands of others, a number among numbers if he is lucky. There is also a high chance of being born to a single parent, or of not getting an education, or a job, and nowhere in his life have that extended family or tribe with which to test out ideas, talk about feelings, and find real-life role models with whom to interact. Do you see the need for small schools?

We have all heard about the family being an endangered species. Meanwhile our institutions and our schools become larger. Children substitute television for dialogue, mutely absorbing the value of violence. In the absence of the extended family, they attempt to form their own groups and rituals, acting out the lifestyles and values most appealing to them. In addition, many adolescent girls in desperate isolation become pregnant in an effort to secure a relationship, if not with the father, then certainly with the child. And so the cycle goes. Set all this in the brooding presence of the nuclear threat, and do you see the need for small schools?

From Theodore Sizer, Professor of Education at Brown University and author of *Horace's Compromise* we hear: "The large high school is a product of the so-called efficiency movement, the pre-World War I fantasy, that, following Frederick Taylor's Industrial Principles, saw the school as a place where certain rivets were hammered into the heads of indistinguishable units - each of which was called a child."

From Walter Karp, a senior editor of *Harper's* :

> John Goodlad's seven year study—*A Place Called School* —shows that in the first three grades, the average class size is 27 students; in high school it's 35. That's a national disgrace. We also have enormous schools. I went to one, and I'll never forget what it was like to be one of 5,000 students: gongs ringing, announcements blaring, guards at either end of a mobbed hallway. It was a prison. Citizens should not have to spend their youth becoming accustomed to prison life.

From Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers:

> ...it is a basic money issue. In any large American city, reducing class size by one or two students means spending tens of millions of dollars. That's why school boards would rather pay for reports saying that class size is irrelevant, than put up the money to make classes smaller.

These two facts alone, first, the fact that The American Family is under siege, and, second, the fact that economic pressures cause our institutions to become larger and larger, compel us to the realization that keeping the small school, and expanding its role, is fundamental to retaining the integrity and diversity of our culture. In an age where the impersonal forces of public opinion polls, normal population curves and Neilsen ratings chip away at our psyches—meeting as we are today to consider ourselves, what we do, how we do it, and how we can keep on doing it, is more than favor to ourselves, it is a favor to our society. We need to consider today just why it is such a favor. The answers we find will help us chart our future courses.

Small schools represent in their varied philosophies the diversity of this country. They can be religious or secular, traditional or experimental, they can have values we support, and values we oppose. But whatever its ilk, the small school's size is, de facto, of critical importance. It is a community, not an institution, and a community considers individuals in a way that institutions cannot. There is a symbiosis between the individual and the community, a mutual dependence which is conscious. I repeat, conscious. The community KNOWS it needs the individual and the individual KNOWS he needs the community. Such knowledge serves the child of the single parent well. Indeed it serves ALL parents well because they have chosen a school which is compatible with their values and the school reinforces these. The child has that sense of being needed, and has a variety of role models within that value system from which to choose.

The most obvious role of a small school is to provide an extended family for the child who needs that. Children of single parents, single parents who are children, children of divorced parents, and children of parents with demanding jobs may all be in need of the particular kind of personal reinforcement that a small school can provide. I have described Somerset in terms of the family more times than I can remember, and it fits well. The number of children in need increases daily. Those of you attending the workshop "Identity, The Family and the School" have a lot to consider.

Just as obvious, at least, is the situation Walter Karp found himself in when he attended high school. Some kids cannot cope with the sheer numbers in a large school; they feel alienated and isolated. They may have perfectly constructed extended families, supported by a strong religious tradition, yet still function best within the small school environment. No, there's nothing wrong with them, it's just that some well-supported kids like big schools and some like small schools. In considering The "Community at Large and the School," you might want to dwell for some minutes on transitions—from small school to large institution and vice versa—for they are an important fact of life for us.

Leon Dash, in his series of articles in the Washington Post about teenage pregnancy, and Bill Moyers in the CBS News Special on the same topic, highlighted a contemporary adolescent issue resulting from our neglect of individuals, which in my view represents the worst consequence of institutional and economic neglect. I mentioned it earlier—the desperate efforts of young, and in this case female, adolescents to bring a sense of meaning into their lives in the poorest sections of our cities. Nowhere is the need for small schools greater and nowhere is there less financial incentive for them to form. What can we do?

The greatest challenge of the Somerset experience for me has been following through effectively with our commitment to diversity in the school. We have rich and poor, black and white, city and suburban, punk and prepple, performers and non-performers, atheists, Jews, Christians and Moslems. The problems presented are the problems of our world. The challenge is to promote communication between all community members so that they understand each other as people first, and then develop respect for their differences. Our size of 65 allows room for this, but overcoming the resistances that we have all experienced within ourselves calls for special knowledge and skill. I hope the workshops on "Student Diversity and the School" devote time to identifying the problems and sharing the skills.

The need for small schools is not in doubt. Let's set about the task of describing it clearly. Let's look at ways in which we can help each other. Let's understand each other as people first and respect our differences, but draw strength from our common mission—to supply our society with a new generation of secure, sensitive and sane human beings.

John Potter is currently the director of the New School of Northern Virginia, having founded it a number of years ago. Before that he was the founder and director of Somerset School, an interracial alternative school in downtown Washington, D.C. a school of 65 students grades 7-12. John was educated in English public schools and Nottingham University before coming to this country.

THE ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN ITHACA, N.Y.:

The Alternative Community School was started in 1974, following the demise of Jon Daitch's earlier alternative school, Markel's Flats, when Dave Lehman agreed to accept the principal's role. The school is a middle school and high school combined, and is part of the public school system. Unlike so many other public alternative high schools started around that time, this one continues to flourish!

An article on the school which appeared in the *Ithaca Journal* in 1983 describes the school (and Dave) as follows:

> On a recent morning in November, the entranceway to the old West Hill school was chaotic, stacked high with backpacks and milling students (185 at that time). It was the day the ACS high school students and staff were to leave for their annual fall retreat. In his office, no large desk separates Lehman from those who drop in to talk and he enjoys narrating how he grew from a politically unaware middle-class youngster in Alexandria, Va., to the political activist he is today...
>
> His relationship with his staff at ACS is "collegial, non-hierarchical, with consensus decision-making and shared management." Lehman confers for three hours weekly with the staff and they also meet monthly for a dish-to-pass supper, which is more social than business. Lehman shares the staff members' problems and counsels them when he can. The group retreats for four or five days in late August to prepare for the year.
>
> What makes ACS different from other schools is the emphasis on family. There are eight units - families—of 8 to 15 students who work closely with one teacher or staff member. Students' real family members take part in the school wherever possible. Parents are invited to go with students and staff on the annual fall retreat and spring camping trip. Another theme is self-governance. One goal of ACS is to teach students how to participate in the decision-making process essential to a democracy. Regular meetings are scheduled for family units, the high school and middle school populations, staff members and the entire school. Through the elaborate network of committees, students make most of the decisions concerning the school. One committee even designed the renovations to the West Hill building...

Dave and Judy Lehman at the Helm of ACS

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A third by-word is change. Lehman says his school's current relationship to the Ithaca school district is the best he can remember...Many of the earlier battles for equal treatment to other schools are no longer necessary...'We're considered legitimate.'... And regardless of how good the relationship between ACS and the Ithaca School district, Lehman purposely maintains some ditance. 'We're on the cutting edge—by choice,' he says. 'If we became like the other schools, there would be no reason for our existence.'

Alternative Community School

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TWO FROM DAVE LEHMAN ON THE ACS:

The Alternative Community School Of Ithaca
The Healthy Side of Exhaustion
by Dave Lehman

Ours is *not* an 'exhausted school'! Our school is alive and well, growing and changing. There are two kinds of 'exhaustion' here—one is the exhaustion of defeat, discouragement, and despair, of frustrating, unsuccessful, unrewarded efforts; the exhaustion of a totally worn-out building in which little works, where there are holes in the ceiling, broken windows, unrepairable plumbing, and faulty furnaces—indeed exhaustion. Then there is a second kind of 'exhaustion'—that deep feeling of satisfaction after the successful completion of a challenge, of a job well done at the end of a full expenditure of one's total energies and commitment; it is the exhaustion of the athlete at the end of the event; it is the feeling at the end of class when you know there was real learning going on! It is this second kind of exhaustion that I feel, and that our staff often feels. So let me tell you something about our school, about the Alternative Community School of Ithaca, New York—a *public* middle school and high school.

In our eighteenth year as a *public school of choice*, we serve the whole School District of Ithaca, which is the most diverse upstate community outside of the big cities of Binghamton, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. While working with students whose parents are employed at Cornell University and Ithaca College, we also serve a 155 square mile rural population, being the northern most county of Appalachia; and we have an approximately equal representation of students from our school district's 20 percent minority population of Afro-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, and others. In addition, 10 percent of our students are officially classified as 'Learning Disabled or Emotionally Disturbed', and another 15 to 25 percent each year are identified as 'PSEN', Pupils with Special Education Needs, being behind in one or more basic skill areas by at least a year. Students freely apply to ACS and are admitted from our waiting list as soon as room becomes available by means of a lottery drawing from our different applicant pools to assure we maintain our diversity. As a public school we are funded at the same basic per pupil cost as the two other middle schools and the central high school in Ithaca. Thus, we are staffed based on the same basic district-wide formula of one full-time teacher equivalent for every 18.65 students. (Those .65

students are the ones that seem hardest to work with, though—they never quite seem to be all there!)

Now, with that quick background about our school district and our student population, let me describe what it is that these students have chosen in coming to ACS, the kinds of reforms and changes that we have made at the Alternative Community School, because I want you to know that schools—indeed *public* schools—*can* be different; they *can* be changed; there *are* other ways of doing school that can be highly successful! I would highlight *three key features* that make ACS a genuine alternative, a real choice for sixth through twelfth graders in Ithaca.

First, we are a democratically run school, a laboratory in civics where students and staff (and to the degree that their time permits - parents) are directly and regularly involved in the day-to-day decision-making of running our school. For example, some two years ago a proposal came before our weekly All School Town Meeting—which incidentally is run by our student Agenda Committee—that 'community service' become a graduation requirement, and our total student body and staff, after much discussion, overwhelmingly voted their approval for a minimum of 30 hours of community service becoming a new graduation requirement. I suggest that is real shared decision-making, a real sharing of power.

Secondly, we strive to personalize education at ACS, to work with each student holistically, not just with their intellectual abilities and difficulties, but their emotional, social, and physical selves as well; to get to know, to work and play, to laugh and cry with them as total human beings, to take them seriously for who they are. Here we have used our resources to develop an average class size of 16 to foster this kind of personalization and have created 'Family Groups' of about 12 students each with one teacher, where that teacher meets at least twice a week with the whole group, serving as their advisor, their advocate, their facilitator of interpersonal growth, and the main contact with their parents.

Thirdly, we have developed a program and a curriculum which has *five major options* by which students may learn, recognizing what works for one student doesn't always work for another. *One*, there are 'classes or courses', both for our middle school and our high school students, which meet four times per week, either for a single 45-minute period or for a double period, often interdisciplinary, as in English and social studies for courses in Facing History or Medieval Times. These classes may be for just one nine-week cycle as is typical of our middle school, or semester or year-long in our high school program, and they are more relevant, not from a State syllabus, but developed by the teachers with their students, such as a course last winter on the 'Persian Gulf War.' *Two,* we have 'Extended Project' blocks in our weekly schedule, all Tuesday afternoons and all Thursday mornings to do different kinds of things that work well in longer time blocks of an hour and 15 minutes to three and half hours, such as 'Creative Writing' out in the greater Ithaca community, computer programming, ceramics, ice skating, video production, bicycling, or 'Outing Challenge', an Outward Bound type of program done cooperatively with staff from our local Youth Bureau. *Three,* is our 'Community Studies Program' in which students are placed individually with adults in various businesses, social agencies, or college departments, 'learning by doing' either as career exploration experiences or for actual academic credit. For example, a young seventh grade girl who thinks she would like to become a veterinarian has a community placement with a local veterinarian—and incidentally may learn that she hates the sight of blood and doesn't want to become a vet—certainly less costly than discovering that after the first year of grad school! Or a high school junior learning bookkeeping and accounting for math credit through a cooperative arrangement between one of our math teachers, our Coordinator of Community Studies, and a staff member at a local Credit Union. *Four,* students, even sixth-graders!, have the opportunity to do 'Independent Studies', one-on-one with a teacher to explore in depth a subject of keen personal interest. Such studies may result not only in a research paper, but a videotape, or a play, a laboratory or field experiment, a photographic essay, or any one of a number of other ways of demonstrating learning. And, *Five,* our students may complete parts of their educational program by learning at another educational institution in Ithaca, not only Cornell or Ithaca college where some of our high schoolers take courses, but a local ballet studio, a karate center, or our Community School of Music and Art. The *overriding idea* is to find ways of learning that will work for each student. Even within our heterogeneous, non-tracked, non-graded middle school and high school classes or courses, our teachers strive to find different ways of working with the different learning styles of our individual students. And where there are classes which have students who are having particular difficulties, we will add a second teacher, specifically trained to focus on and assist the learning of these students as a support to the subject matter teacher.

But what evidence is there—you ask—that our students are successful? How do we know the changes we have made —the reforms, the different ways of doing things—really work? I offer three indicators of our success: *one*, our waiting list and our growth from a junior high of 60 students to a middle school and high school of 260; *two*, performance of our students even on conventional standardized tests which is comparable or better than their counterparts in Ithaca's other secondary schools; and *three*, our high school graduates—and we have had twelve graduating classes—an average of 85 percent go to colleges across the country either immediately after high school or within three years of their graduation, others become fully employed, and none are on welfare or in prison.

All of this has not gone unnoticed by our local Central Administration and School Board, for they are increasingly interested in what we are doing, as are the teachers and administrators in the other secondary schools in Ithaca as they look to make reforms in their own programs. At the state level, we have just become one of the first group of schools in the New York State Education Department's 'Partnership Schools Program' being designed as a major means of supporting the implementation of the Board of Regents approved Commissioner's 'New Compact for Learning'. And this has come about largely through our involvement nationally as one of approximately 100 schools who are full members of the 'Coalition of Essential Schools', spearheaded by Ted Sizer of Brown University.*

But I'm not here just to speak about our school, but to speak about the need for fundamental educational reform in this country and about public schools of choice. Things can be different in public education; our public schools *can* change. Indeed, many schools and communities have already made or begun to make major, fundamental changes. There are relevant, motivating, self-esteem building ways of helping all young people become critical thinking problem-solvers. There are more authentic ways of evaluating learning than outmoded conventional, standardized paper and pencil tests. And, yes, there was a point when I homeschooled my own children for part of one of their elementary years in rural Ohio, and, yes, I did co-found a non-public, independent alternative school in rural Texas, at least partly for my own children, again in their elementary years. But supporting such different ways of educating as these were relatively easy for me as a white, middle class, slightly balding, definitely graying male with a PhD. And I do believe in the importance of such opportunities; yet, for the overwhelming majority of our population, it is the public schools which *must* change, and can change, and at least some *are changing*, as evidenced by our school. And in order for public schools of choice, like ACS, to be positive contributors to this desperately-needed change in the schools of *this* city, *this* state, and *this* country, then the following conditions, which are true for our school, *must* be met:

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*See more information on Ted Sizer's work in his article on page 284, and a study by Lois Kenick of his work starting on page 360.

First, there must be real choices among essentially equal schools that are funded by the same per pupil expenditures.

Secondly, there must be real access to all of these schools of choice, which means not only free public transportation to such schools, but real communication to all students and their parents about such choices and the process of admission, communication that is not dependent solely on a written letter sent home.

Thirdly, each school of choice must guarantee a fully diverse student population made up of representatives of all of the minorities within a given school district, from all of the economic sectors of that district, and from students with learning difficulties as well.

Fourthly, there must be real democratic control of such a school of choice by the administration, staff, students, and parents.

For as important as it is that our schools become more humane places, reorganized, and with major changes in their curricula, textbooks, teaching philosophies and methodologies, and with more direct involvement and even direct control by those being served by our schools, changes such as those I've described about ACS—the most fundamental change that also must occur, and *occur now*, is the elimination of our dual system of 'separate and unequal' education. There *must* be a more equitable redistribution of funds to level the playing field of education. And this will not be brought about by treating schools as competing businesses, for the free-market dynamics will not work to correct these inequities and injustices found particularly in our urban and rural schools, rather they will work to deepen these divisions even more. Although money, or the lack of money, is a major factor in this inequity, making money available to foster even more the existing private and parochial school choices, will only serve to weaken our public schools at the very moment when they show the greatest signs and potential for real change. Businesses can, however, increasingly be helpful in providing 'mini-apprenticeships', career explorations, and other 'learning by doing' experiences as in our ACS Community Studies programs. They can be helpful in making it easy for their employees to have release time to attend conferences at school with their youngsters' teachers, and by providing funding to equalize the quality of education and the physical facilities of all our schools.

For things can be done; and you and I must, I say must, do them! It is for all the children of this nation and for their futures—we can do no less. It is toward *this* end that we must exhaust all of our efforts, particularly in a democracy, in a land still waiting for 'liberty and justice for all.'

This piece was originally presented as part of a program at Carnegie Hall in New York City on November 11, 1991, organized by John Taylor Gatto as a graphic demonstration of what is possible, offering a spectrum of highly successful educational alternatives to our present governmental child-prisons.

Beside Dave's talk, this volume also contains articles taken from the Carnegie Hall presentations by Dan Greenberg (on Sudbury Valley School) on page 105, Mary Leue (on The Free School) on page 157, Pat Farenga (on homeschooling) on page 173, Kathleen Young (on Hawthorne Valley School) on page 235, and John Taylor Gatto (on school as soul-killer) on page 285.

Pat Farenga, Dan Greenberg, Dave Lehman and Mary Leue, All Gussied Up for the Carnegie Hall Program!

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CHANGING ADOLESCENTS IN THE 80'S: TOWARD FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

by Dave Lehman, ACS Principal

THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG GOING ON HERE. The here is the United States, or Ithaca, New York, or alternative secondary schools, or our own Alternative Community School. The 'something' is adolescence (not adolescents), a supposed developmental stage of human beings between about age 13 and 21. I strongly believe that the problems our young people, parents, and other adults working with them are having during this time period are not a given. I believe that adolescence as such has been constructed or created by the Western world or culture, particularly the United States, and that a healthy, basically more natural developmental process is moving from childhood into young adulthood, without the painful period of adolescence.

Most cultures of people less affected by the Western world (e.g., Australian aborigines, Eskimos, and the Samoans of Margaret Mead's early studies) have no period of life like adolescence.[1] Rather, at the age of puberty, (12 to 14 approximately) children are inducted into the adult world, often through a 'rite of passage' ceremony. Data on the actual age of the onset of puberty in this country has shown a significant drop in the past 100 years, such that our young people, on the average, are physically mature 2-3 years earlier than their grandparents. Yet more and more we keep them from real participation in the ongoing life of our adult communities.[2]

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[1] *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*, by Margaret Mead, 1928—'Can we think of adolescence as a time in the life history of every girl child which carries with it symptoms of conflict and as surely as it implies a change in the girl's body? Following the Samoan girls through every aspect of their lives we have tried to answer this question, and we found throughout that we had to answer it in the negative....If it is proved that adolescence is not necessarily a specifically difficult period in a girl's life—and proved it is if we can find any society in which that is so—then what accounts for the presence of storm and stress in American adolescents? First, we may say quite simply, that there must be something in the two civilizations to account for the difference.'

Since the industrial revolution and the early 1900's, young people have had increasingly less and less of a real role in their communities and families, and instead have been forced into their own 'youth culture'. Despite their physical, sexual and mental adult capabilities they are compelled to rebel against their parents and the adult world they long to become a part of—a truly unnatural, unhealthy, all too often misguided struggle. (This is not intended to negate nor deny the crucial role often played by youth as critics and changers of society, but refers to their artificial, age based separation as created by adults). They basically have to mark time throughout their teen years until they become of 'legal age'. No wonder they turn to experimentation with drugs and alcohol, and form a close culture of their peers, often becoming 'rebels without a cause'. And we their parents become increasingly resistant, frustrated, disillu-sioned, and seek some source to blame, frequently ourselves. Other adults look down on youth, distrusting, disliking, and often fearing teenagers. Yet such a beginning analysis falls short and presents no hope. I maintain that this is due to our failure to make a political assessment of this situation, for I see these youth as an oppressed minority; perhaps one of the last minorities in this country to be recognized and helped in attaining their freedom.

A few current examples will demonstrate the range of oppression that our young people experience: a) at the age of 13 they have to pay adult admission fees at the movies but are kept a truly unnatural, unhealthy, all too often misguided struggle. (This is not intended to negate nor deny the crucial role often played by youth as critics and changers of society, but refers to their artificial, age based separation as created by adults). They basically have to mark time throughout their teen years until they become of 'legal age'. No wonder they turn to experimentation with drugs and alcohol, and form a close culture of their peers, often becoming 'rebels without a cause'. And we their parents become increasingly resistant, frustrated, disillusioned, and seek some source to blame, frequently ourselves. Other adults look down on youth, distrusting, disliking, and often fearing teenagers. Yet such a beginning analysis falls short and presents no hope. I maintain that this is due to our failure to make a political assessment of this situation, for I see these youth as an oppressed minority; perhaps one of the last minorities in this country to be recognized and helped in attaining their freedom.

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[2] *To Become Somebody: Growing Up Against the Grain of Society* by John Simon, 1982—'A hundred years ago, most young working class women were seeking employment and starting to think about marriage at an earlier age than is typical now. Where a century ago a young woman might have been expected to menstruate at sixteen and marry by eighteen, she is now likely to begin menstruating by twelve but still be in school at twenty. The average age at which most American girls experience menarche is just 12.8, and 92% of all fourteen-year-olds have already menstruated. Meanwhile, the demand for blue collar labor has declined and pressure increased to stay longer in school, greatly extending adolescence in both directions. These changes put a tremendous amount of pressure on young women to make decisions about themselves and their 'willingness to get involved in intense sexual activity — far more pressure than their grandmothers' generation experienced.' (176-177)

A few current examples will demonstrate the range of oppression that our young people experience: a) at the age of 13 they have to pay adult admission fees at the movies but are kept from seeing certain kinds of X and R rated movies. (This is not in support of X-rated, pornographic, sexist films—rather it raises the question of why the 'adult price' must be paid); b) varying from state to state, there are laws preventing teenagers from holding a wide variety of jobs, handling much of their own finances, or owning property.[3,4];

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[3] *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized Society*, by Paul Goodman, 1956 — 'It's hard to grow up when there isn't enough man's work.... By 'man's work' I mean a very simple idea, so simple that it is clearer to ingenuous boys than to most adults. To produce necessary food and shelter is man's work. During most of economic history most men have done this drudging work, secure that it was justified and worthy of a man to do it...' (17)
'Positively, the delinquent behavior seems to speak clearly enough....It asks for manly opportunities to work, make a little money, and have self-esteem; to have space to bang around in, that is not always somebody's property...' (50)

[4] *Escape from Childhood*, by John Holt, 1974 — 'I propose instead that the rights, privileges, duties, responsibilities of adult citizens be made *available* to any young person, of whatever age, who wants to make use of them. These would include, among others:

c) In New York State (and a growing number of others), if a youth commits a crime of violence, s/he will be tried in an adult court at the age of 13—thus one of the very few ways in which we recognize our young people as adults is as criminals.[5] And the developmental psychologists (including a new specialized group of 'adolescent psychologists') further this myth of 'adolescence' and convince us to believe that moving from childhood's 'dependence' to adulthood's 'independence' has a prerequisite 'normal' intermediate stage of 'adolescent independence'. Yet what could be more 'unnatural', 'unnormal' than a society that forces its youth into a false sense of independence, for humans simply do not function independently —we are all social beings from the moment of our birth until we die. And the young people show us they are not 'independent' by seeking out other

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1. The right to equal treatment at the hands of the law— i.e., the right, in any situation, to be treated no worse than an adult would be.
2. The right to vote, and take full part in political affairs.
3. The right to be legally responsible for one's life and acts.
4. The right to work, for money.
5. The right to privacy.
6. The right to financial independence and responsibility— i.e., the right to won, buy, and sell property, to borrow money, establish credit, sign contracts, etc.
7. The right to direct and manage one's own education.
8. The right to travel, to live away from home, to choose or make one's own home.
9. The right to receive from the state whatever minimum income it may guarantee to adult citizens.
10. The right to make and enter into, on a basis of mutual consent, quasi-familial relationships outside one's immediate family—i.e., the right to seek and choose guardians other than one's own parents and to be legally dependent on them.
11. The right to do, in general, what any adults may legally do.' (2)

[5] *U.S. News and World Report*, 'Special Report: Troubled Teenagers', 14 Dec. 1981 — 'Some states have attempted to drop the legal age at which minors become adults to as low as 12 years of age, and some experts say juveniles who commit 'adult' crimes should be treated as adults.' (42)

teenagers and creating a developmental dead end—their peer group or even gangs—as a temporary holding ground for all their creative, physical, mental and emotional energy. And why not?—the oppressing adults of American culture (intentionally or unintentionally) do not take them seriously; other than as a unique group of consumers to be seduced into spending what little they have on rampant consumption of media-hyped youth culture (records, magazines, clothes etc.). Another clear example of not taking youth seriously is the recently developed local, state, regional and national competition called 'Olympics of the Mind', in which our bright young people compete with each other to solve puzzles or simulations, rather than using their substantial mental talent on real present day problems.

WHAT IS NEEDED, then, is a cultural turn-around or revolution in which our most valuable natural resources—our youth—will be liberated from their oppression as adolescents, and begin to function as the young adults they are, acquiring experience while contributing meaningfully to society from their rich store of physical, emotional and mental energies. As adults we will first need to recognize our perhaps unknowing, innocent, and culturally manipulated participation as oppressors, and then to join arms with our young people as co-authors in the struggle for their freedom and full participation in society. As parents we will have to give up our efforts to control young people and help them learn to take real control over their own lives. As teachers in alternative schools, we too must join arms with our students, helping to empower them and assisting them to take responsibility for their own lives. And, we must also work with their parents in raising their consciousness of the oppression of adolescents. This is all in clear contrast with those who have claimed in the past[6] and the present[7] that it is the youth who are the problem, not the society and its schools.

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[6] *The Vanishing Adolescent* by Edgar Friedenberg, 1959 — '...we treat our silent, alienated, or apathetic youth as problems, as psychological or social aberrations from the normal course of adolescence.' (18)

[7] *U.S. News and World Report* (see above) — 'Psychologists say many youngsters, bedeviled by pressures to enter the world of adults too early, become jaded by their mid-teens and are unable to cope with the breadth of problems facing them....The upshot, contend these experts, is that loneliness, boredom and rebelliousness are rampant among teen-agers and that disaffection with life runs deep in youth from every level of society.' (40-41)

These changes obviously will not occur quickly just because we all come to more or less agree with this analysis (or any other) of adolescence in America. Rather, while we engage in the struggle to change the 'ageist' laws affecting our youth, we will need to create viable alternatives right now. Specifically, this could mean such things as: student-run cooperative businesses, youth hostels or housing cooperatives, legal aide, family planning, and child care, to say nothing of alternative schools where coercion and compulsion are replaced with democratically controlled teaching-learning centers, and cooperative student-run enterprises where schooling for mindless participation in society is eliminated.[8,9]

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[8] *Vanishing Adolescent* (see above): 'School ought to be a place where you can not only learn to *be* a scholar, a fighter, a lover, a repairman, a writer, a scientist, but learn that you are *good* at it, and in which your awareness and pride in being good at it become a part of your sense of being you.. The greatest safeguard to any democracy is a continuing community of self-respecting young people who understand and accept their relationship to society. The basic unit of such a community is a stable self to respect.' (217-218) Yet without a society that respects its youth, this seems a sham, and indeed Friedenberg went on to propose a truly elitist approach to the problem of adolescence by suggesting the education only of a select few as noted in George Martell's 'High School: No Place to Find Out Who You Are', a review of Edgar Friedenberg's *Coming of Age in America: Growth and Acquiescence* (1965) in *This Book Is About Schools*, edited by Satu Repo, 1970: 'Friedenberg not only hopes to produce 'gentlemen', he is also looking for 'aristocrats'. He demands a kind of liberty for the individual that is intolerable in a society whose principles are basically democratic.' (111)

[9] 'Children, Schools and Utopias' by George von Hilsheimer in *This Book Is About Schools* (see above): In describing his own school, Green Valley (recently closed, in Orangeville, Florida) George reminds us of our history when he notes: 'It (Green Valley) exists in a tradition that includes the Ford Republic, Summerhill, the Gorky Colony, the Ferrer Modern School, Finchdem Manor, Prestolee (a Lancashire County School) and many others.' (177)

THE SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS of this analysis of adolescence in America for those of us in alternative secondary schools are numerous and critical, for we are in a unique position to be at the forefront of this cultural transformation. First, we have the heavy task of raising the collective conscience of our whole community—students, staff and parents of our alternative schools—to this oppression of young people. Many of us will have a hard time accepting this. Some of our youth will find it frightening, too risky, with too much responsibility, and will be sorely tempted to nestle comfortably in the womb as long as their parents will care for them. Some of our parents will reject such an analysis for it will call upon them to let go of their children earlier, something for which they may not be prepared. Some of our teachers will be hard pressed to learn new things, moving outside of their areas of experience. Certainly much of our greater adult world will resist our efforts at involving young people actively in the real adult world. Thus, we will need to draw more and more on each other for support in our mutual struggle.

Second, we could look seriously to the period between middle school and high school as the more natural termination of childhood (roughly between ages 12 and 14, about the end of eighth grade and the attainment of puberty), and develop our own 'rites of passage' into young adulthood. For example, there is no reason why we couldn't define more clearly with our middle schoolers what it is they need, to function in a beginning way in the adult world. The successful completion of the New York State Competency exams in math, reading and writing, for instance, could be more appropriate as part of this rite of passage than at the end of high school. There could be other competencies to be demonstrated by our middle schoolers (in our own style of the Australian aborigine's 'walkabout')—such as, certain knowledge of human sexuality, a successful, independent study with a concrete end product, a community service successfully done and documented, one or more community studies placements with perhaps a photographic log, demonstrated ability to work with others on a group task, successful completion of a 36 hour solo experience either in the city or in the country as well as a log of exploratory experiences in all the major academic fields. Each student in turn then, whenever s/he is ready, at a spring ceremony with their whole school community, would present themselves for their rites of passage into young adulthood.[10]

Third, we could work closely with our high school students to determine what they want out of their alternative high school program and shape our own criteria for graduation rather than being controlled by what the dominant state schooling system wants them to have. This means defining with them what they want to acquire skill at or work on as young adults and then translating this into the state system's language of 'credits and major sequence', as many of us have begun to do with our own processes for high school graduation.[11]

Fourth, young people need real experiences in the adult world where they can learn job skills, try out interests, and discover the meaningfulness of work. Cooperative, student-run enterprises should be developed as one of the major educational components of our alternative high schools with 'training stipends' paid during an exploratory year or two and then regular hourly salaries for the more fully involved and experienced. These enterprises could include such things as—an automotive *small engine* small repair shop, a dramatic theater productions troupe, a neighborhood cooperative store/delicatessen with an accompanying bakery, an alcohol and drug free weekend 'nightclub' with live entertainment and homemade foods and beverages, an organic farm/garden with a year round solar green house, a publications/print shop producing various student writings and artwork, a media productions center producing radio and television programs, or a wood/metal shop specializing in such things as furniture making or knife making. Each one of these is in fact possible for many of our students already having been doing such things in their own 'spare time'. But why not really develop such activities as a significant part of our alternative high school programs? In a related way, other students might choose to engage in mini-apprenticeships in their own community, acquiring their job and work skills in an even wider area.[12]

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[10] 'Walkabout: Searching for the Right Passage from Childhood and School' by Maurice Gibbons, *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 1974; and subsequent issues of the newsletter entitled *Walkabout: Exploring New Paths to Adulthood*; both present a number of different performance requirements, not Carnegie units, as better measures of actual learning.

[11] 'School Profile: Walden III', *Alternative Schools Exchange: the Unicorn*, Vol. I, No. 3, Winter 1981 - 'The twelve Rite of Passage Experiences (R.O.P.E.) represent the broad areas which encompass human life, and which either form or enrich our lives according to our understanding of their influence and use. No one person is expected to be equally proficient in all twelve areas. Neither is any one person expected to be equal in comparison to everyone else in all twelve areas, for that would violate our sense of personal uniqueness. ' (26)

These are far reaching ideas with numerous questions and, no doubt, roadblocks to their implementation. Yet, this is a critical period in the history of human kind, and I feel we are called to a great challenge—not to acquiesce and go along with the simplest thing, accepting our oppression as a given, but to strive for the best in all of us in creating a fully humanized world in which no one has power over anyone else.

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[12] This is *not* intended to be in contrast to academic study, but to seek a balance between secondary school learning for future study with learning for real job/vocational skills. Numerous sources have influenced my thinking here, including in particular:

◆ *The Road to life: An Epic of Education*, Books 1 and 2 by A. S. Makarenko, 1951—the amazing account of the Gorky Youth Colony in Russia in the 1920's.

◆ *Youth: Transition to Adulthood* by the Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee, 1974—commonly known as the Coleman report after the panel 's chairman; these radical ideas for reforming American high schools, although highly acclaimed by many, have yet to be put into real practice.

◆ *The School Book* by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, 1973 - particularly the section on 'A Fable' (46-51).

◆ *Education in Rural America—A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom*, edited by Jonathan Sher, 1978—tremendous critique of rural education and vocational programs with Sher's own suggested solution outlined in chapter 8 'School-Based Community Development Corporations: A New Strategy for Education and Development in Rural America. '

◆ *Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better*, by John Holt, 1976—replete with suggestions for converting capital 'S' Schools at least into 's' schools by doing less 'schooling' and more learning by doing.

I am providing these footnotes both as a sort of bibliography as well as a more detailed discussion of several of the points I've outlined. It hopefully will also be a useful reminder that many of these ideas are not new, and that what could be new would be our willingness, finally, after years, even decades, to act on them!

Since 1974, Dave Lehman has been the principal of the award-winning Alternative Community High School, a public alternative school in Ithaca, New York. Along with his wife Judy, Dave has brought that school into its present status of honor and success through deep understanding and concern for the human condition and the plight of the young, as well as a superbly balanced sense of truly democratic institutional learning. Dave has been a minister, a Peace Corps worker, a research educationist, and Lord knows what else - and is a frequent contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ.

THE SUDBURY VALLEY SCHOOL
2 Winch Street
Framingham, Mass. 01701

(From the catalog:)

ABOUT SUDBURY VALLEY

Sudbury Valley School is a place where people can decide for themselves how they will learn about the world. Here, students of all ages are free to choose where they will be, what they will do, and when they will do it. Freedom of choice is at the heart of the school; it belongs to the students as their right, not to be restricted.

The fundamental premises of the school are simple: that all people are curious by nature; that the most efficient, long-lasting, and profound learning takes place when started and pursued by the learner; that all people are creative if they are allowed to develop their unique talents; that age-mixing among students promotes learning by all members of the group; and that freedom is essential to the development of personal responsibility.

In practice this means that students initiate all their own activities and create their own groups. The physical plant and the equipment are there for the students to use as the need arises. The staff, noted for its high degree of professionalism and its commitment to the school, serves as a human resource, to respond to requests for aid. All parts of the school are meant to serve the varied educational needs expressed by the students...In order to attend, the students commute daily, sometimes from great distances.

The diversity of their backgrounds is a microcosm of the larger community; what they share is a commitment to our educational goals.

ACTIVITIES

Sudbury Valley is equipped to support a wide range of interests.

Academically, the staff offers instruction in basic skills, mathematics, languages, physical and natural science, social science, history, writing and literature. Instruction takes place in large or small classes, or as private tutoring, depending on circumstances.

The arts are eagerly pursued. Working with teachers or unassisted, students can often be found engaged in painting and

SUDBURY VALLEY SCHOOL

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drawing, photography, sculpture and pottery, stained glass, music (theory and performance) and drama.

THE SETTING

The Sudbury Valley School was founded in 1968. It is accredited by the Independent School Association of Massachusetts and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Located on the former Nathaniel Bowditch estate, the ten acre campus adjoins the extensive conservation lands of the Sudbury Valley Trustees and Callahan State Park. A millpond offers opportunities for swimming, boating, ice skating and fishing. The old stone mansion and additional buildings are furnished, for the most part, like a home. The atmosphere at school is relaxed and informal.

GRADUATION

Sudbury Valley School awards a high school diploma to students who complete all the relevant requirements, chief of which is the ability to hold their own as responsible members of the community at large.

Graduates have gone on to colleges and universities all over the country, and abroad. Most are admitted to their schools of first choice. Other graduates have entered directly into the worlds of business, trade, arts, crafts and technical vocations.

Students age sixteen and over who wish to enroll should be aware that it is customary to expect two years of attendance before the graduation procedures can be completed.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL

The school is governed democratically on the model of the traditional New England Town Meeting. The daily affairs of the school are administered at the weekly School Meeting, at which each student and staff member has one vote. Rules of behavior, use of facilities, expenditures, staff hiring, and all the daily routines are determined by debate and vote at the School Meeting. In this way, students share responsibility for the effective management of the school and for the quality of life at school.

Infractions of the rules are dealt with through the School Meeting's judicial system, in which all members of the school community participate. The fair administration of justice is a key feature of Sudbury Valley and contributes much to the students' confidence in the school.

Parents have a major role in setting school policies. Legally, the school is a non-profit corporation, and every parent

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becomes a full voting member of the Assembly, as the corporate membership is called. The Assembly also includes students, staff and other elected members. It meets at least once a year to decide the school's budget, tuition rates, and all general questions of policy.

THE SUDBURY VALLEY SCHOOL

"School For a Post-Industrial Society"

by Dan Greenberg

Three hundred years ago, if somebody had ventured the opinion it is possible to create a country in which people from all walks of life, all persuasions, nationalities, and backgrounds could live together in freedom, peace, and harmony, could live happy lives, could realize their personal dreams—a country in which people showed each other mutual respect, in which people treated each other with complete equality, and in which all decisions were made by the mutual consent of the governed, people would have considered that person a crazy utopian and would have brought all the experience of human history from the dawn of time as witness to the impossibility of such a dream. They would have said, "People just don't live that way. It doesn't work. It can't happen."

Happily for us sitting here today, two centuries ago our founding fathers did not treat that dream as utopian and instead found a way to make it possible to put it into practice. They did something unique in the history of the human race. They had before them the task of creating a new country, a new form of government. And they set about this task not by revising existing forms of government, not by starting from the models that they had around them and tinkering with them and adding a little here and a little there, but by sitting together and spending a tremendous amount of time and thought on "zero-base planning", on creating a government from scratch, starting from no assumptions other than those that they were willing to make explicitly at the moment. We have records of their deliberations, and many writings that reveal what they thought and how they came to their conclusions. They proceeded by examining the condition of the human race, the nature of the human animal, and the social and cultural conditions of the world into which the country they were founding was going to be born.

The founders of Sudbury Valley School, beginning in 1965, did much the same thing when it came to education. We too were dissatisfied - dissatisfied with the models of schools that we had available to us at the time, and we had a deep conviction that there was more at stake than just the proper curriculum or the right pedagogical methodology or the right mix of social and emotional and psychological factors that had to be applied to the educational scene. We were convinced that the time had come for complete re-examination of what it is that a school had to be about if it were to serve as an appropriate agent of society in this country in the late 20th century and beyond the year 2000. So we spent several years working on this, trying to gain an understanding of what school is for and how the goals of schools can best be realized.

Now, it's pretty much generally agreed that there are two major roles that a school fills. One is to provide an environment in which children can grow to maturity, from a state of formativeness and dependence to a state of independence as adults who have found their unique way of personal expression in life. The second goal is social rather than individual. The school has to be the environment in which the culture prepares itself for its continuation from generation to generation. This is a goal that a community requires of its educational system if it wants its way of life to survive.

There is no guarantee that the social goal and the individual goal will mesh. In an authoritarian society, for example, where the lives of every single individual are controlled by some central authority, the social goal promulgating the authoritarian system is in clear conflict with any primacy given to the individual goals of the people in that society. One of the functions of a school in an authoritarian society must therefore be to subject the individual to severe restraints in order to force that individual to meet the needs of society as a whole. The educational systems of highly authoritarian regimes play down individual variation and individual freedom and effectively try to eliminate them.

On the other hand, in anarchistic educational systems, the individual is focused on, almost entirely to the exclusion of society. The individual is elevated above all else and modes of social interaction and cultural survival are given very little attention.

When we started thinking about Sudbury Valley School, we had no way of knowing whether there would be any way of harmonizing individual needs and social needs in the United States today. We started by examining the social side because it was clear to us that no school could possibly survive if it didn't meet the needs of modern American society. It might survive as a fringe school for some few discontented people who perhaps wanted a different way of life in this country. But as an institution that was meaningful to the mainstream of American society, there was no hope for it to survive unless it could tie into the deep needs of American culture in this era. So we set about asking ourselves, 'What is it really that the society wants today in order to flourish?'

The key to the answer to this question was the realization that the United States is fundamentally a free market economy in which personal freedom is maximized on a social level. Ours is a society which, as a community, extols personal freedoms for its individual members and has social ways of guaranteeing these freedoms through the grant of rights and redress to individuals. In addition, the United States, in 1965, was clearly entering an economic era which was a novelty on the world scene—namely, the post-industrial economic era, which was beginning to be recognized as a reality. Today, of course, the image of a post-industrial society is commonplace. The key concept which differentiates a post-industrial economy from an industrial economy is the realization that in a post-industrial society, in principle, every task that can be defined by a set routine can be taken out of human hands and put into the hands of some sort of information processing machine. The main difference between an industrial and a post-industrial society lies not in the presence or absence of produced goods, but in the means by which those goods are produced. In an industrial society it is essential to have a virtual ARMY of human beings who are fit somehow into the mechanism of the overall industrial machine, who play an integrated role in the production process as parts of the machine.

The strength of the industrial society was that by using machines, it could magnify many, many thousandfold the ability of the society to produce material benefits for its members. But the machines couldn't do this alone. The machines were not sophisticated enough to carry out this process unaided. In order to make it happen what was needed was human intervention and human help. Human and machine became as one, something that probably has never been better illustrated than in the great classic film 'Modern Times' that Charlie Chaplin produced over fifty years ago.

The deal that was made by various societies, one after the other, when they chose to enter the industrial era was to agree to forfeit much of their humanity, much of their freedom as individuals, in order to benefit as a society from the wealth and prosperity that the industrial era promised. This isn't an altogether ridiculous deal by any means. It's perfectly understandable that human societies that for thousands of years had accepted as inevitable the grinding poverty and deprivation and misery of the overwhelming majority of people—it's not surprising that such societies, when faced with the promise that miraculously and with incredible suddenness virtually the entire population could raise its standard of living and survive in a relatively comfortable manner, chose, one after another, to sacrifice willingly some of their personal freedoms, many of which were illusory anyway, to achieve that goal.

The post-industrial era is of a different nature, however. The post-industrial era ask no sacrifice of the material benefits that the industrial era provided. On the contrary, the development of sophisticated, computer-driven machines and information processing systems has promised an even greater degree of national wealth and diversity. But the demands on the individual are now completely different. In the postindustrial society there is essentially no place for human beings who are not able to function independently. There is no room for people trained to be cogs in a machine. Such people have been displaced permanently from the economic system. The needs of a post-industrial society, regardless of the governmental structure, are for people who can be independent, entrepreneurial producers of economic benefits. People have to take initiatives, to think for themselves, to create for themselves, to become productive for themselves. In a post-industrial society, there is no longer a mass of predetermined slots into which to fit people. The economic demands of post-industrial America are something that you hear from personnel directors in every industry and company today, small or large. The demands are for creative people with initiative, self-starters, people who know how to take responsibility, exercise judgment, make decisions for themselves.

This meant to us that a school in post-industrial America, in order to serve the culture, has to have the following features: It has to allow for a tremendous amount of diversity. It has to allow for people to become, on their own, selfstarters, initiators, entrepreneurs. And, at the same time, it has to allow children to grow up completely at home with the cultural values of our country, especially such essential values as tolerance, mutual respect, and self-government.

We then looked at the requirements for individual realization. These too had undergone a rather interesting change of perspective through the work of psychologists and developmental theorists. The commonly accepted model of the human had been that of a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, born as infants with basically nothing in their heads and therefore growing up to be what other people have written on that slate. That's a model that put a tremendous responsibility on the people around the child who write on that child's slate. In a sense, that model was the utter negation of the individual as an independent being, and the subjugation of the individual will to the influences of those around it who impose their wills and their intellects on it from infancy onwards.

But Aristotle, 2,000 years ago, and developmental psychologists in recent times, developed other models that seemed to us, when we were creating Sudbury Valley School, to be much more realistic and much more in line with what we saw to be the nature of the human species. These people considered children from birth as being *naturally curious*, as being active participants in the learning process—not born with blank minds but, on the contrary, born with information processing systems in their brains which require of them, demand of them, by nature, to reach out, to explore, to seek to understand the world and make sense of it, using their sensory interactions and their agile brains to build pictures of reality—world views—in their minds that enable them to function in the world. In our view there was no such thing as a passive child. Every child is active. Every child we had ever seen, certainly in early infancy, was devoured with curiosity, was energetic, was able to overcome almost every barrier, was courageous, persistent, and constantly seeking to meet every challenge that came their way. And these are traits that we saw continuing year after year in children as long as it wasn't forced out of them by some crunching outside intervention.

So it seemed clear to us that the ideal environment for children to attain the full realization of their inherent intellectual, emotional, and spiritual potentials had to be one which, subject only to constraints imposed by safety, is totally open for exploration, free of restraints, free of external impositions; a place where each individual child would be granted the freedom to reach out everywhere and anywhere they wished so that they could follow through on all of their curious probing.

This realization came upon us *like a thunderclap* because we saw such a beautiful fit between the needs of society today and the needs of the individual. Both society and the individual in modern post-industrial America require that schools be an environment in which children are FREE, and in which children can LEARN HOW TO USE FREEDOM, how to be self-governing, how to live together as free people in peace and harmony and mutual respect. Not an environment in which one group dominated, or exercised power over another. Not an environment in which children were put into any sort of externally imposed track, or forced to think about prescribed subjects. But an environment in which children and adults alike work together to guarantee free accessibility to the world, to the greatest extent possible, for each and every child And that, in effect, is what Sudbury Valley school is about.

If you come to Sudbury Valley, the first impression you get is that of a regular school in recess. You notice children, outdoors and indoors, freely going on and off campus, freely walking about, moving from room to room, changing from group to group, talking, interacting, reading, playing. So much playing! More than anything else, the children at Sudbury Valley School, of all ages, play. The better they are at playing, the better they are at fashioning new models with which to understand the world. Play is the greatest teacher of all. Every innovative adult who has ever written about the creative process has talked about the extent to which he or she *played* with new ideas, moving freely in and out of new, original conceptions of the world without being hampered by preconceived notions of reality. The children at Sudbury Valley know how to play. They know how to take their play seriously. They know how to play with intensity and with focus.

Sudbury Valley is a community governed by itself. Every child in Sudbury Valley has a vote in every matter that pertains to the school. The school is governed by a School Meeting in which four-year-olds have the same vote as adults. *Every decision* in the school is made by that School Meeting. The budget, the hiring and firing of staff, the letting of contracts. In the Sudbury Valley community, no adult wields any particular power over any child, nor does any child wield power over any other child. All decisions are made in the School Meeting or delegated by the School Meeting to people elected on a temporary basis to fill a particular need. Our community is a model of democratic governance, much like the New England communities that we serve.

The children at Sudbury Valley, from age four and up, by being free, learn how to function as free people in a free society. They learn how to find their own pursuits. They learn how to occupy themselves. They learn how to create their own environments. They learn how to respect each other. They learn how to cooperate. They learn how to use the School Meeting to legislate community rules, and to forge compromises when there are mutually exclusive demands made on property, or on places, or on activities. They learn how to meet challenges. They learn how to overcome failure since there is nobody there to shield them from failure. They learn how to try something and relish success, and they learn how to try something and fail at it - and try again. All of this takes place in an environment in which

Photographs of Sudbury Valley Courtesy of Dan Greenberg

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there is absolutely no grading of testing, of evaluation, of segre- or of the imposition of arbitrary outside authority.

The school has now been running for 24 years. It has in it children of all ages. We have 125 students now and we have an incredible record of fiscal success as well as educational success. When we first started, people looking in from the outside said that if children have a real say in financial matters, their inexperience will lead them to squander the resources of the school in a profligate manner. They'll buy candy. They'll waste their money on trivialities. The facts speak otherwise. The ability of children to govern themselves is in no way less impressive than that of adults. Our school has never received one cent of government subsidy, endowment, foundation money, or any other outside funds. It is totally tuition-based. The tuition in 1968 was on a par with the public school expenditures in the schools around us—$900 per pupil. Today, 24 years later, at a time when educational costs have soared in other schools, and when all we hear is that not enough money is being spent on education, Sudbury Valley School costs about $3000 per pupil, less than half the per pupil costs of the local public schools. And that's the whole cost, including capital expenses and including all the other hidden costs that other schools write on different sets of books. The tremendous efficiency of our fiscal operation is due entirely to the manner in which decisions are made by the entire school community, and due to the extraordinarily modest expenditures required by students who are eagerly and intensely pursuing their passionate interests.

Educationally, the Sudbury Valley School has had a remarkable record. The students are bright-eyed, intelligent, articulate, and are equally comfortable conversing about ideas, climbing trees, hanging out with children ten years older or ten years younger —even with adults. They have mastered pursuits as varied as calculus, photography, French horn, skateboarding, pottery, poetry, bookkeeping, pathology, backwoods survival, leather-working, carpentry—the list is almost as long as the number of people who have been enrolled. Despite the fact that when we started people said that our students who wanted to go on to college would never be admitted because they had no grades, no transcripts, no school recommendations, our record has been an unbroken one. We have a 100 percent rate of acceptance into colleges, trade schools, art schools and the like for every single student who has ever wanted to continue their formal education. Our students present themselves to college Admissions Officers as people who are self-contained, who know

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figured out how they want to carry on with their lives. The Sudbury Valley graduate has a degree of self-knowledge, self esteem and an awareness of his or her own strengths that is unexcelled in schools today for people of comparable age.

We feel that Sudbury Valley is a superb model of an educational environment for post-industrial America. The joy, happiness, pleasantness, friendliness, and warmth that extend to anyone who is part of the school community is palpable. Trust, too, is everywhere, and everywhere to be seen. Belongings lie unguarded, doors unlocked, equipment unprotected and available to all. We have open admissions—everyone can attend. And by walking across the threshold, become, in an instant, part of the warmth and trust that is the school.

Sudbury Valley School is a true democratic republic of children and adults working together. Does it sound utopian? It may, but no less utopian than the United States of America sounded when people first heard about it in the rest of the world. Our school, we feel, is indeed a utopia that is as real as the country of which it is a part.

This piece was originally given as a speech at that famous, Gatto-organized Carnegie Hall event in November, 1991. See articles by John Gatto, Pat Farenga, Kathleen Young, Dave Lehman and Mary Leue elsewhere in this volume.

In addition to founding and inspiring Sudbury Valley School, along with his wife Hanna and a host of other splendid staff persons, Dan also writes books reflecting his voluntaristic, latitudinarian humanism based on long experience as well as sound theory concerning the nature of life and growth, such as the one which follows. See also a review of another book on page 382, and a list of more of his writings, all of which can be ordered from:

Sudbury Valley School Press, 1992. $7.00
2 Winch St., Framingham, MA 01701.

A NEW LOOK AT LEARNING

by Daniel Greenberg

Sudbury Valley School

At the Sudbury Valley School we have encountered a new version of the old story of the parent-child dialogue: "Where did you go?" "Out." "What did you do?" "Nothing." All too often that seems to be the refrain associated with the school by parents and by people in the community. When the school opened, there was a whole catalogue of objections to what we were doing; as the years have passed most of them have slowly faded away. In the beginning, we were told that the problem was that we were new, and people didn't want to try out a new school before they knew whether it would work or survive, or be accredited. Of course now we're not new any more, and we have survived, and we are accredited. Earlier, there was always the question of how our students could get into college without courses, grades, or transcripts. We had to try to convince people on the basis of abstractions. Now there isn't any question anymore, because any graduate who has wanted to go to college has been admitted. In fact, many have been getting in without a high school diploma.

Then there was the question of how students would be able to transfer to other schools, in case their families moved, or they wanted to leave for other reasons. That too was an objection that people used as a reason for not enrolling their children—because perhaps at some later time they might have to go to a "regular" school, and then they wouldn't be able to get back to "reality." Now that argument has gone, because there are lots of former students who have gone back to "regular" schools and have done excellently, without losing time at all. There were so many objections in the early years! People said the school would be chaotic; it would be undisciplined; it would be rowdy; it would be a fiscal nightmare because so many people have access to money; and on and on. We used to think that when people finally saw that the objections were groundless, slowly but surely they would come around to our way of looking at things, or at least accept us and think that ours was a pretty reasonable kind of educational system for their children and/or themselves. Alas, how wrong we were! Because there is one fundamental objection that will probably stay with us for the foreseeable future: namely, that "this is a place where children don't learn anything." This is something that the students enrolled at the school hear from their friends, and often from their parents. They hear it from grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins. We get it from all kinds of incredulous outsiders who walk into the school and say that it's very impressive, but then end with the view that students don't learn anything here. I think that this is probably the major factor that keeps new people from enrolling in droves.

What is really at the heart of the objection? It's not enough to answer by saying, "Yes, they do learn." We never really know how to handle it. The proposition seems so ridiculous, that we often end up saying, in effect, "What do you mean they don't learn anything? Look at A—he's learned this. Or look at B, he's learned this. Or look at this student sitting and reading." We respond with a flood of ad-hoc and ad-hominem counter-examples, with no real effect. And it's mostly because we really don't know how to get a handle on the nature of the problem or the question. Our answers don't really relate to the objectors. They look at A reading a book, and that doesn't satisfy them either. So he's reading a book! So what? That isn't learning. Nothing seems to satisfy them.

What, then, is the heart of this objection? Is it actually true that students don't learn anything at the school? If not, why do people think it is true? And what do students learn here? I'm going to address each of these questions in turn.

In order to get a handle on the whole problem, we have to analyze fairly closely the generally accepted view of learning. In this culture, the meaning of the word "learning" is closely determined by four fundamental assumptions. The first assumption is that one knows what ought to be learned by people. The second assumption is that one knows when it ought to be learned. The third assumption is that one knows how it ought to be learned. And the fourth assumption is that one knows by whom each thing ought to be learned. These four assumptions in essence determine the meaning of the concept "learning" for this culture. Let's look at them one by one.

The first assumption is that we know what ought to be learned. That is to say, the prevailing view is that there is a basic body of knowledge that every human being should know. This assumption is not even discussed. The only thing that is ever argued is the exact composition of the "basics."

It is important to realize that this assumption is not an objective reality. Rather, it is completely determined by the time and the place and the nature of the culture that makes it. In other words, far from being a general truth about knowledge and about learning, it is an assumption that is completely dependent on the state of the culture that makes it. In different eras and in different places, various societies have made—and still make—

catalogs of what has to be learned. For example, not too long ago, in American culture, there was the simple tenet that the "three R's" were the basics. During the twentieth century, education in this country has been "modernized," and to that list of three R's have been added successively other subjects that were considered equally important. Consider the 19th century in Great Britain: then it was felt that an educated person has to know Greek and Latin literature. In fact, it was considered that only unsuccessful or stupid students would study scientific or technological subjects, or even the English language! Then you go back to the Middle Ages and you find out that the "basics" consisted of a course in natural philosophy, speculative philosophy, rhetoric, and so forth, and a very clear avoidance of practical subjects. I don't want to go into a history of this subject. I only want to make the simple point that the assumption that we know what ought to be learned is determined completely by the cultural environment, and changes with time. Unfortunately, the one we're stuck with right now in this country was determined by an industrial technological view of our culture that is obsolete.

Indeed, two of the three R's are demonstrably obsolete. Nobody really needs to know arithmetic. Everybody uses pocket calculators, or calculating machines, or computers, or adding machines. No accountant will sit and add long columns of figures by hand, or multiply by long multiplication, or divide by long division. Even the best will make more mistakes by hand than by machine. I can't think of anybody professional who uses arithmetic now. Even people who go out shopping take along their little pocket calculators on which they tot up their expenditures. As far as writing is concerned, that word has many meanings, but certainly two of the main meanings were penmanship and spelling, which were considered very important because people communicated either orally or through writing longhand letters. Today, anybody who's foolish enough to use hand-writing is really at a disadvantage in any practical situation.

Many schools and colleges don't even accept handwritten papers. Your average letter of application for a job, or your average business correspondence, would never be done longhand. In fact, it's considered an almost esoteric phenomenon if a person drops somebody a handwritten note. And it's equally unimportant to know how to spell. An awful lot of people I know, some of whom are very famous people, don't have the foggiest notion how to spell. Even prominent people. One of the things any good secretary is expected to do is to correct all the boss' spelling, and even secretaries don't have to know how to spell:

all they have to do is get paid for the time it takes to look up words in the dictionary.

The point is simply that the concept of curriculum that prevails right through college was determined by the industrial society that this country had in the 19th century. There were certain fundamental skills, methods, procedures, and technologies that were needed in order to keep the industrial machine going. And I don't mean on the blue collar level alone, not only for the people who worked the assembly lines,' but also for the secretaries, the accountants, the bookkeepers, and even the executives. The whole industrial machine operated according to some relatively simple robot-like functions that enormous numbers of people had to perform, and for which it was indeed necessary to have a basic, universal common curriculum for everybody. Of course, even then it was a question of whether or not a culture opted to have an industrial economy at all. The large agrarian economies didn't bother with these things. For example, Russia at the time of the revolution was just beginning to decide that it wanted to get into the industrial era, and the illiteracy rate was something like 95%. It just wasn't important for a mass rural culture to know the three R's. In fact, in the entire society there was only a small cadre of people who could write. Everyone else would go to these scribes to have all their letters and documents written or read for them. But for the population at large, it wasn't essential to know how to read or write or calculate or do any such thing in order to till the land or build the houses or do the kinds of activities that were central to an agrarian society.

Times change. In this country, we have come to the point where the most routine tasks do not have to be performed by people, even though often they still are. We have the inherent capability to eliminate from the humanly-operated domain the entire body of automatic, robot-like operations that had to be done by enormous numbers of people. Indeed, the revolution that the modern communications industry has brought about in society is quite as profound as the revolution that mechanization achieved a century or two ago, when it simply did away with the need for vast numbers of physical laborers to do heavy work. (That revolution, too, was not universal; and there are some societies today where heavy mass labor is still used.) The new information-processing technology is now doing away with the need for droves of workers in industrial plants, or bookkeepers, or purchasers, or secretaries. Nowadays, once an industry is computerized most of the operations are untouched by human hands. For example, when you place an order for a book with a major publisher, virtually everything is handled by computer. And when the inventory drops, and they need to order a new printing, the computer tells the presses to do it. You can imagine how many thousands of clerks have been replaced. I was in the publishing industry when this transition took place, and I worked for two companies, one of which was automated, and the other still had all its accounting done by bookkeepers standing behind tall desks just like you see in old movies—standing and writing longhand all the thousands of entries that had to be made day by day. Those bookkeepers don't work there anymore; even that old-fashioned company has entered the computer era.

The point is that robot-like individuals are not needed any longer in large numbers to man the industrial machine, and this fact has, at a stroke, rendered obsolete the entire pedagogical conception of a basic set of things that have to be known by everybody. Now we are faced with a completely different educational problem. I'm not talking about the Sudbury Valley School, or about our particular philosophy. What I'm saying applies to anybody planning an educational system for the modern era in this country. Nowadays, instead of preparing a list of subjects that are necessary for everybody to know, all you can do is draw up an enormous catalogue of different subjects and activities that are available in the culture, and then proceed from that point. If you believe in a planned society, you can try to apportion a certain number of people to each of these various fields for the good of society as a whole. That's a political decision, one which still doesn't mean, of course, that everybody is going to learn the same thing. It implies a complete lack of freedom of choice on the part of the students, but at least it's modern, and it doesn't make the basic mistake of thinking that everybody ought to be trained in the same way. The other major political philosophy that is prevalent in the world today is that of personal freedom. In that system, it seems to me that you have to end up saying that each person should be able to decide for himself what he wants to do. But the chief point I want to make is that regardless of political philosophy, the idea that there is a basic curriculum that everybody ought to know is gone.

Let us return now to the original question, and let me bring it down to specifics. Say we have a twelve-year old in the school and somebody asks, "Is he learning anything?" What they mean is that they know that every twelve-year-old should be studying social studies, advanced arithmetic, and English grammar. This is the assumption that underlies the question. So if we answer, "He is not learning social studies. He is learning photography, or music, or Greek history"—indeed, if we answer that he is learning *anything else* but social studies, English grammar, and advanced arithmetic, the questioners will not be satisfied. As far as they are concerned, as long as the students in this school who are twelve years old aren't learning what the society today thinks every twelve-year-old ought to be learning, they *are not learning*. And it's only when people realize that it's a mistake, no matter what your philosophy of education is, to think in the late 20th century that twelve-year-olds ought to be learning a specific set of subjects—only when people realize that this just isn't a viable educational view any more for modern American society, only then will they be able to say, "Well, I don't have to insist that they learn social studies, arithmetic, and English grammar when they are twelve. I can accept other subjects, other activities, as valid learning for a twelve-year-old."

The second underlying assumption is that one knows when a subject ought to be learned. This has a more modern origin that the first assumption. It's only been recently that people have become arrogant enough to know in detail how and when one absorbs and handles knowledge. To be sure, people always knew that little children don't quite have the ability to handle things as well as adults, overall. But people saw that there was such a variety in how children develop that no one dared become dogmatic. A Mozart might play the piano at age three, and a John Stuart Mill might speak a dozen languages when he was four; one child would do one thing, another child did something else. It was only when psychology became "modern" that it got the idea that there is a specific, universal track that every mind follows in its development, and that all healthy minds proceed at pretty much the same rate along this track. One of the consequences of this view is that it's bad to be learning the wrong thing at the wrong time. For example, if you are expecting somebody by age two to do a particular thing, and you find that he is not, then you conclude that you have an incipient learning disability. I'm not exaggerating when I say age two. It is becoming much more common to extrapolate into earlier years, and engage in what is called "early detection" of alleged learning disabilities and psychological problems.

It is considered a property of the human mind that certain mathematical skills, certain scientific skills, and certain skills of reasoning are acquired at certain ages. As a result, it becomes important (according to this view) that schools provide exactly the "right material" at the right age. Also, it is considered bad to give third grade work to first grade students, because this doesn't develop their minds along the proper track. I think everybody is aware of these views.

One of the things that set me to thinking about this whole subject was a nightmare I had one night. I dreamt that just as we have schools now where all six-year-olds are put through drills in reading, and are drilled and drilled at it, whether or not they are interested in it—and if they don't achieve at the proper rate, they are immediately tagged and put into a special category and given special teachers. What I dreamt was that the same thing was happening to one- and two-year-olds with regards to speaking. I suddenly saw a school for toddlers where they were all being taught how to speak, just the way we teach how to read, syllable by syllable, word by word. And if they weren't proceeding at the programmed place they were going to be placed immediately into the "speaking disability category," and so forth. Perhaps this sounds ridiculous, but after all, we've totally accepted this attitude when it comes to reading. Why not speaking? And if you have three-year-old who is speaking at a "two-year-old level," why not put him in the Special Ed. class? It's a nightmare, and I think it's well on its way to happening.

So again you ask yourself, where does this come from? How do these psychologists pull it off? Why was the society in general, and the professionals in psychology in particular, so eager to accept this kind of approach? Again, I think the answer goes back to my old theme. The so-called science of psychology today is the natural child of the 19th century industrial-technological-scientific world view, which insisted on reducing everything in the world to a linear, tracked, simple series of progressions. This was essentially the condition of knowledge in any field. There was no such thing as real, solid knowledge that was not perfectly ordered, in an exact sequence of rational steps. If it wasn't ordered in that way it was non-scientific, it was "art," and as art it was allegedly the product of the emotions and of the feelings and not of the mind. Products of the intellect, by contrast, had to be "scientific." I don't think it's surprising people reached this view, because they were living in an era when everybody was drunk with the success of linear technology in the material world. After all, the view was appropriate to machines—to mass production in the assembly line—to industrialization—to any enormous technological venture. It was true that those enterprises were ordered in a precise, linear fashion. So central was the industrial materialistic view of the world, that it engulfed all of knowledge, and the universal aspiration of the intellectual world was to be included under the umbrella of "science", in order to be legitimate. Indeed, if anybody came along and said, "My field doesn't want to be organized in a logical, rational way," they ran the risk of being called a nonintellectual field, of being told, "If you can't show us the track of knowledge in your field, you're not really worthy of being a bona-fide subject." This approach was a perfectly natural product of the enthusiasm with technology that gripped Western society in the 19th century. People were consumed with a passion to extrapolate the technological world view to absolutely everything. And the fields of social theory and psychology were swept right along with all the others.

If you understand, then, that there is a deep yearning on the part of social scientists and psychologists to be "scientific" and along comes a person who purports to give, on the basis of what looks to be a very nice scientific work, a good linear theory of the mind, you can see why they will jump at it. And it comes then as no surprise that people like Piaget or Skinner rapidly become widely accepted by their colleagues, because they rescued the profession from the oblivion of being an "art" and turned it into a scientific discipline. I think that this idea is going to fall by the wayside eventually, but it's only going to happen when the whole culture begins retreating from the technological world view. You can see a trend in that direction in modern thinkers today. There are books being published by very eminent social scientists who are beginning to say, "This view of human knowledge really isn't valid. It doesn't take into account the subtleties. It doesn't take into account the complexities. It doesn't take into account innovation. It doesn't take into account change. It doesn't take into account the emergence of new theories, new ideas. It simply isn't adequate to explain what the human mind has done with the world." This is being said by more and more people who have a name in their fields. Whether their voice is going to prevail in the long run I don't know, because certainly in the short run the trend is toward a more feverish technologization of the social sciences. I think we are going to have a major struggle on this issue in this country, although for the time being the forces of technology are probably on top.

The third assumption generally made is that one knows how any subject ought to be learned. That there is a "proper" approach. That there is a "correct way" to study a subject. Even if we have in our school a person who is learning what "ought" to be learned—for example, social studies—at the "right" time—namely, at age twelve—if the person isn't learning it in the "right" manner from the "right" textbook, it's not considered valid. The extent to which this has taken over education is astounding. It used to be widely accepted that there were a tremendous variety of approaches to any subject. One went to different schools, even traveled to different countries, to hear different people develop a specific subject in different ways. One went to a particular teacher because he had a fascinating way of presenting a certain subject. This was an accepted feature of learning. Any subject was thought to be varied, complex and intricate, and every original mind was thought to have a different way of looking at it. It was once considered the height of absurdity to say that there is a "best" way to teach physics, or social studies, or anything. Alas, pedagogy, too, wanted to become a science, no less than psychology. Pedagogy too had to become an exact, technological field. The obvious result was that everything had to be done in the same way or it wasn't valid. All textbooks in a given field have to be the same. That's almost an axiom of publishing today. If you submit a textbook manuscript to a publisher that deviates from the accepted way, you'll get a rejection slip. It may be a great book, but if it is not the way the subject is taught in the schools, they won't want to publish it. Of course, in a sense publishers are just representing the prevailing view. They are marketing agents, and they don't want to get stuck with a book that won't sell. What they are saying is that nobody out there in the educational world is going to use a book that is any different from the book that is used by everyone else.

I don't have to belabor this. It's an exact consequence of the kind of thinking that I was talking about earlier with regard to psychology. And in order to please somebody who is looking Sudbury Valley in terms of the prevailing educational atmosphere, our shelves should be filled with the current editions of textbooks in all fields that are being studied in other schools. That would be a "good" library. Our library has a lot of books in it, and they are very varied but it basically cannot be considered a "good" school library as far as educators are concerned because in any given subject they are going to look around here and not going to find only the "right" book in most fields. And the same applies to any student learning with the aid of any of these books.

I think, again, that in this regard a lot of people who stop to think about it realize that there is a basic flaw in the idea, regardless of their philosophy of education. The flaw is that it rules out completely any concept of innovation in a field. What's missing is any reference to how any one of the subjects being taught in school has ever changed or professed. The textbooks always deal with static subjects presented "correctly." To me this is an internal inconsistency that should be obvious to anybody. I can only hope that eventually this contradiction will come to somebody's attention in the teachers' colleges. Or perhaps this view will disintegrate on its own. As long as you assume that pedagogy is an art, or has variety, you are never under pressure to be right. You only have to have your own approach. You go to hear a teacher, and you either like his approach or you don't like his approach, but you don't ask whether his approach is "right." You say that it is self-consistent, or interesting, but it is not a question of being right or not. But in the present educational system people are constantly plagued with the problem of finding the "right" approach, and each time they find one they label it "right," and it becomes very embarrassing a year or two later to be faced with a situation where it turns out that it wasn't right after all. That leads to a lot of problems. There is always a "new" reading program. Every two or three years there is a whole new "right" way to teach reading, because the last "right" way didn't work. The educational world is constantly being embarrassed, only they don't ever seem to be ashamed of the fact that they were wrong. I guess there is always a hope that between the fact that they never seem to do the right thing, and the fact that actually there is no right thing, it may dawn on people eventually that the whole approach is invalid from beginning to end.

The fourth assumption is that one knows how to identify by whom any given subject ought to be learned. In a way this is the most insidious of all assumptions, but it follows directly from all the other points I have made. Our schools have a sophisticated and ever improving system for tracking people, and for finding out at an ever earlier age what specific "aptitudes" a person has, so that a precise, narrow track can be determined for this person to follow throughout life. In this society, such a process is exceptionally subtle, because it involves an authoritarian approach within a free culture. By employing a variety of ruses the system produces a process which allows it to inhibit personal freedom without really feeling that this is what is going on. The person doesn't feel that something arbitrary is being done to him—which is in fact what is happening. Instead, the system creates the impression that it is simply looking out for his own best future, trying to find out what his needs are, and helping him fulfill them. The fact that others are deciding what his needs and interests are, what he is going to do with his life, is covered over by the illusion that really it is only *his needs* that are being considered. Now this is a combination of all the evils we have talked about. The assumption is that psychologically one knows enough about the mind to identify aptitudes; and a further assumption is that once one knows aptitudes, one also knows how to track a person so he will in fact reach the goal that is being set out for him. The whole approach is the ultimate in pedagogical and psychological technology. The only trouble is that it is humanly absurd. All you have to do is read biographies to discover how, time and again, attempts to identify a person's interests at an early age failed. To be sure, sometimes a person of three or four does give very definite indications of where he is heading, but most of the time quite the opposite is the case, and very often people show their true aptitudes only in their 20's and 30's and sometimes much later. Truly, there is not much to argue if we only look at the real world around us.

I think that we can understand why people in their society are going to feel, no matter what, that students at Sudbury Valley don't learn anything. They are bound to feel that way. There is just no way out. Because we are not fulfilling any of the four basic assumptions that define the new meaning of "learning" for our culture. And there is no way our philosophy allows us to act on any of these assumptions. So there is no point answering a person, "Look, A is reading a book, and B is learning this and that." Our approach just doesn't fit the whole society's frame of reference, and it's not going to fit until the outside world drops the assumptions that underlie its view of education.

Still, the question remains: Do people learn anything at Sudbury Valley? Obviously to us, the answer is "yes," from our perspective on the word "learning"—a perspective that may not be current, but is nevertheless rooted in our culture's history.

The kinds of learning processes that I see occurring at the school all the time fall into four major categories. First, I think we have learning going on here in the development of personal character traits. Right off, that doesn't sound like "learning." But actually, character education has always historically been considered an important part of education, and even today gets a lot of lip service paid to it. Unfortunately, in the current educational system, it's talked about but nobody has any idea what to do about it. I think that we have developed a setting in which it can be shown that certain character traits are enhanced— traits like independence, self-reliance, confidence, open-mindedness, tolerance of differences, the ability to concentrate, the ability to focus, and resilience in the face of adversity. Everyone of these traits tends to thrive in people who stay here for any length of time. Indeed, the society at large sees the opposite traits being enhanced in their educational institutions and they worry about it. They worry about the fact that their settings seem to encourage dependence, a "follower" mentality that relies on others' judgments rather than on one's own. They worry about the fact that such a high percentage of people are insecure, intolerant, unable to concentrate on their work, and not resilient to failure. All these are phenomena that people in general are worried about, and I think that at Sudbury Valley we can show that we foster the first set of character traits where the prevailing educational system fosters its opposites.

The second major type of learning that goes on here is in the domain of social etiquette. That will probably amuse a lot of people, because often one of the first impressions people get from the children in this school is that they are brash. But I don't think that this is a lasting impression. More important, I think that there are many aspects of social etiquette that flourish here in a striking manner: for example, being at ease with people of all ages and backgrounds and types (instead of the widespread trait that you see among children of the same age in public schools whose tendency is to turn aside, not to look an adult in the eyes, to be ill at ease, to shuffle, and to mumble). There is the characteristic of being considerate of other people's needs—a trait that I think is fostered mainly by our judicial system. There is a fundamental acceptance that other people have rights, that other people have needs, that other people have domains of their own that have to be respected. Then there is the trait of being articulate (people are often so inarticulate in the outside world!). And the traits of openness and trust—I am very reluctant to use those words, but not quite as reluctant as I was in 1968, when they were catchwords for a social fad—as opposed to the suspicion and paranoia that seem to be rampant in the society, especially among teenagers. And also, there is a certain basic friendliness and courtesy that pervades relationships in the school.

A third category of learning that goes on is in the domain of academic subjects, where we not only see the acquisition of knowledge occurring, but we also find it taking place in ways that other schools would find unusual. For example, people do learn how to read in this school, sooner or later. It's intriguing to watch closely how this happens in each case, because it happens at different ages, and in completely different ways. I don't want to go into any details now, but just by way of example: some learn how to read by being read to over and over and practicing a book until they learn it by heart and start memorizing the words; others learn by piecing together syllables that they have picked up one by one; others learn by trying to associate letters with phonetic sounds. Each one does it in his own way, and at his own initiative. And I think it is very important for us to point out not only that substantive knowledge is being acquired but also by methods which are so varied that we would clearly be doing irreparable damage if we intervened and tried to direct the process from the outside.

Substantive learning goes on here in the fundamentals of arithmetic. It goes on in the principles of democratic government, and in current events. (This is actually rather interesting. The children in this school are probably more up to date on what's going on in the world than their peers in other schools even though we don't have "social studies" classes.) There is substantive learning going on here in the domestic arts, including money management, taking care of yourself, survival, cooking, sewing, child rearing - a whole group of subjects which in other schools are relegated to a tertiary place, for poor learners or for girls, though the subjects are clearly central to living a good life. Here it goes on in ways that I think are worth documenting, ways that have nothing to do with age or sex or even with future career intentions. The list of different specific subjects learned by different people goes on and on—writing, management, painting, music, etc.—and it clearly deserves study and documentation.

Finally, there is a fourth category of learning that goes on here in a way that is not even remotely matched by any other environment, and that is the category of methodology. To be sure, there is a tremendous amount of writing done, for example, on the techniques of problem solving. But again, it's assumed in the usual technological way that there is a "method" for solving problems, and what one should do in school is teach this method. The only trouble is, the basic assumption is again false. If there was a method for solving problems, we wouldn't have any problems left. The whole point of a problem is that you don't know either its solution or the exact right method to solve it—if there is one. The idea that there are multiple approaches to problem solving, that there are lots of parallel paths that can be explored, that some are better than others, that they have to be compared, that there are all kinds of consequences that have to be followed out in order to make these comparisons - the really complex notions of what problem solving entails are an everyday feature of this school. Students have to deal with them every minute of the day in different areas. From small problems like how to get hold of a piece of equipment, or what to do next, to major problems like what am I going to do with my life, or how do I study a certain field, or how do I answer the questions posed in the book I am reading, and so forth. Sudbury Valley does it better than anybody else. Students here also learn how to use resources, both human and archival. To be sure, in other schools somewhere around fifth or sixth grade they take the children to the library and describe the Dewey decimal system, and the librarian gives a talk on how to use the library. We all went through this, but most people never can figure out how to use the library anyway, and don't. Anybody who has taught in college or graduate school knows that many graduate students have difficulty using the resources at their disposal. It's something that they have got to learn, and they have also got to figure out how to find the people who can help them. At Sudbury Valley we take all this for granted—the idea that when you want to learn something you have got to find someone who is an expert in it to help you, and you have got to figure out where you can find the resources in our library, or in an outside one. These ideas, and how to implement them, are commonplace around here.

Perhaps it is fitting to end with something that Tolstoy wrote about 100 years ago. He wrote: "Don t be afraid! There will be Latin and rhetoric, and they will exist in another hundred years, simply because the medicine is bought, so we must drink it (as a patient said). I doubt whether the thoughts which I have expressed perhaps indistinctiy, awkwardly, inconclusively, will become generally accepted in another hundred years; it is not likely that within a hundred years all those ready-made institutions—schools, gymnasia, and universities will die, and that within that time there will grow freely formed institutions, having for their basis the freedom of the learning generation." Here was a great thinker writing in the 1860's that it would take another 100 years for these ideas to come to fruition. A century later, we were founded. It's uncanny. Will it take another 100 years to catch on?

SIX FROM THE FREE SCHOOL:

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CONFERENCE IN JAPAN

by Chris Mercogliano

While on a twelve-day combination tour and peace pilgrimage across Japan, which included visits to both an alternative and a public school, our fearless ΣΚΟΛΕ editor, Mary Leue, (accompanied by her fearless associate, Chris Mercogliano, co- director of Albany's Free School) was the featured guest-speaker at an evening conference on alternative education held in Kyoto on January .

The former Imperial capital, Kyoto is a majestic city filled with ancient temples and monasteries representing the various Buddhist sects, and is the only major Japanese city which was not destroyed by American fire-bombing during World War II. Kyoto is also home to The Planet School, which is thoroughly enjoying its first year thanks to the inspiration and leadership of Keiko Yamashita. It was Keiko, along with several Planet School co-workers and supporters who hosted and organized the conference.

A large group of 50-75 people (a difficult bunch to count with a lot of kids and coming and going) were in attendance, including Kazuhiro Kojima, founder of the Global Human Bridge in Taksago City, Japan, and Dayle Bethel, Director of the Paideia World School in Osaka—two other of Japan's pioneering alternative schools. Mary spoke about the history of the Free School±the hows and whys of starting it back in 1969—and about how the school gradually developed into a full-fledged community. Many questions from the audience followed, with people wanting to know how the Free School financed itself, how kids fared after leaving, how the school interacted with the community and vice versa, and whether or not we included kids with handicaps or disabilities.

The session continued for well over three hours, leaving the impression that there is a strong interest in alternative education as well as the definite beginnings of an alternative schools movement bubbling and boiling just under the surface, much like a number of volcanoes throughout Japan. (Asayama, a volcano on the southern island of Kyushu, was active enough to prevent us from visiting a Nipponzan Myohoji Peace Pagoda located there.)

Quoting a recent poll, Keiko Yamashita says that over fifty percent of the children in Tokyo hate going to school. Competition and pressures to succeed in Japanese schools are overwhelming and apparently are still on the increase, with no sign of letting up, while at the same time the government remains staunchly anti-alternative education. As a result, Japanese people continue to look to the American alternative education movement for guidance and support. The people in Kyoto were deeply grateful to Mary and me for appearing at their conference, and it was certainly a great honor and a pleasure for us to have an opportunity to contribute something to their efforts to create change in Japanese education.

The school referred to in this account which hosted this gathering—The Planet School in Kyoto—and its talented founder Keiko-san Yamashita are both covered in more detail starting on page 166 below.

KIDS, DEMOCRACY AND COMMUNITY
by Chris Mercogliano

The Free School is a community within a community, really, and we're at our best when there is a high level of interaction between the 'inner' school and the 'outer' world around the school. You will often find guests coming in to share their talents, loves and interests, and likewise you will find many Free School kids and grown-ups going out to do the same. Many of us, for example, participate in a number of community service projects such as staffing soup kitchens and food banks, and singing and visiting in nursing homes and senior citizens' centers. There are many learnings in these kinds of exchanges, the most central being the experience of relatedness and of the give and take that must flow freely if a collection of individuals are to achieve a level of cooperation sufficient to consider themselves a true community.

Since we're located in the state capital, it's not surprising for Free Schoolers to get involved with a political "issue" of one sort or another. This, then, often raises the age old controversy around children-activism-indoctrination, which is without a doubt a sensitive area. Interestingly, the whole thing just recently spilled over into the local papers—with us at the center of the storm.

The story goes like this: In February, '92, four Free Schoolers decided to fight to help save the New York State children's theater, which we attend often, and which stages its performances in a state-run facility on the edge of our neighborhood. With the Legislative Office Building only six blocks away, the kids began lobbying various state legislators in person. In order to direct much needed media attention to the problem, the kids asked me to call a local newspaper reporter and ask him to cover one of their sessions. He jumped at the chance and the following are excerpts from his article which ended up as a front-page, headline story in the Albany *Times Union* on a Monday morning:

> Assemblyman Ronald Canestrari is running a little late this morning, but the lobbyists aren't quite through. It's a three on one encounter and the visitors are trying to avert a massive funding cut for the New York State Theater Institute by the State University of New York (SUNY).

'Did you know,' says Rebeccah Johnson, 'that SUNY is building a $13 million library?' Canestrari, who was gliding through the session until now, pauses. 'No I didn't know that,' he confesses.

Actually, the State University at Albany's high-tech computerized library is a $45 million long-range capital venture that does not directly affect the Theater Institute's $1.9 million program today. But the contrast is still apparent. So is the legislator's surprise. He says he will look into it, and then, shifting in his chair, says, 'Well I know you're busy...'

Recognizing an overstayed welcome, the young women are on their feet. Johnson and Elisha Mittleman, 10, and Gabrielle Becker, 11, along with Lily Mercogliano, 8, who was sick that day, may well be the youngest lobbyists around the state Capitol these days, as they set about joining the battle in an effort to save the Institute.

Their targets say such an effort from any children on any topic is all but unique. 'We've had all sizes and descriptions,' says Canestrari, 'but these are the youngest. Probably the brightest. Certainly the most sincere.' Assemblyman Edward Sullivan, who is now working on a measure to give the Institute about $1.5 million, reducing the funding cut to 25%, says he also was impressed by the girls lobbying.

With the Institute caught up in the state's bigger budget picture, the girls say they realize that it may have to take some kind of cut, a refrain they have heard along the way. In the recent meeting with Canestrari, they listened and nodded as he explained that money is tight, but also raised the issue of SUNY's proposed computer tape library as an example of what they feel is excessive capital spending at a time when an ongoing program is threatened.

So far, the girls have met with Capital District legislators and made it as far as an aide to Sen. Ralph Marino, the Senate's majority leader. They are still lining up other appointments, including one with Assembly speaker Saul Weprin.

Trying to gauge the result of their work so far, the girls appear practical. While they're encouraged by Sullivan's attempt to get more money through, they also

Lily, Rebeccah, Gabby and Elisha, demonstrating resolution for the Times-Union photographer in front of the New York State Legislative Office Building

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> sense that there have been some false promises along the way. One legislator's aide, they recall, promised that her boss—whom the girls preferred to keep anonymous—would certainly vote on a bill when one comes up. But the girls note that wasn't really much of a commitment. 'He's not doing anything,' Lily said, 'He doesn't care. He'll only do something if a bill comes up.'
>
> They've also found, they say, that it's one thing to get in a door at the Capitol, but quite another to have someone listen. The same aide, the girls recall, spent the session staring right at them and trying to look as if she was paying attention, 'But, like, she'd go out on another planet,' Becker says. 'She wasn't listening.'

The ink was barely dry on this story when the kids' and my efforts were blasted by a very well-known columnist for the same newspaper. The column's title, *Crusaders Exploit Children,* kind of says it all; but for the sake of a good story, I'll include a few highlights here:

> ...Then why in this precious time of life - when adult cares and tensions are farthest from their thoughts—should youngsters be used as props and fronts for crusading groups, ambitious parents, and anyone else who sees tugging at young heartstrings as a way of achieving their goal?
>
> At the Capitol recently were four girls lobbying to restore planned funding cuts of the New York State Theater Institute by the State University of New York. Wait a minute, lobbying? The youngsters were 8, 9, 10, and 11 years old. Sure they are sweet, sincere kids—as are all kids in their age of innocence—but what do they know about lobbying?...
>
> The girls were obviously put there to attract attention and echo the views of those who have a cause. I'm afraid it's a shameless way to get a message across.
>
> Let the grown-ups make the decisions based on wisdom, education, experience and the hard knocks encountered on the bumpy road of life. The younger generation will have its chance to influence policy and shape history in due time. As for now, let kids live in their own world and enjoying being kids.

The four lobbyists felt deeply insulted by the columnist and immediately decided to write him a letter. I felt that a response to the newspaper's readership was called for, so I wrote a detailed, several page long discussion of the issues the column had raised. The editor of the paper graciously agreed to print the majority of my piece on the Op-Ed page, with the headline *When Kids Aren't Pawns.* Here are some excerpts from it:

> ...Reading between the lines of his column, which is replete with romantic euphemisms about childhood, I can hear his genuine wish that children neither be forced to grow up prematurely nor exploited as media puppets by manipulative adults, thereby having their right to a full and free childhood seriously infringed upon...
>
> Because I share Ralph Martin's concern about the manipulation of children, I told the kids I thought it best that they do the lobbying by themselves. Anxious to do their own talking, they heartily agreed; so with me serving as their appointment secretary, the project was launched....
>
> There should be no doubt that the motivation of these four children came from no other source than their own deeply held concerns about their own lives. They have all been to numerous Theater Institute productions, and have learned dramatics and creative writing from the Institute's visiting teacher/artists and interns. One student has attended their theater arts school and another has served an apprenticeship with a scenery artist. In no way did I coax them into their actions, nor did I put words into their mouths, directly or indirectly. In fact, at several points along the way, I asked them to look at both sides of the issue that they were raising with our elected leaders.
>
> ...The question remains whether it is appropriate for individuals in middle childhood to be spending time learning about and then perhaps addressing social problems. My own answer would begin with a consideration of the particular issue, children and historical context.
>
> I recall an educational video made at the height of the Cold War called, "In The Nuclear Shadow," in which a cross-section of American young people are asked about their thoughts and feelings concerning the threat of nuclear war. What follows is a sobering litany of paralyzing fear and despair. Youth after youth talks about

feeling powerless to do anything about the problem, about not expecting to live a full life and about wanting to grab what little they can before it is too late. The seeds of apathy, cynicism and a general 'me first' attitude are all too apparent.

At least for now, a sense of impending environmental catastrophe has replaced the threat of nuclear holocaust in the minds of the current generation of kids. Keeping in mind that children are indeed vulnerable to manipulation (as are a great many adults), I can certainly envision circumstances when it is highly appropriate for children to publicly display their support for improved air quality or any of a number of other environmental issues which intimately affect their future on the earth. The key, in my book, is that they not be indoctrinated by adults, no matter how well meaning, and that their actions be freely chosen.

Birmingham, Ala. in the late 1950's comes to mind, when hundreds of children chose to leave school one afternoon to stand on the picket lines in place of their parents, who either were already in, or could not afford to go back to, jail. The courageous action by those children broke the back of police chief Bull Conner's system of enforced segregation and won a pivotal victory for civil rights in the South.

My firm belief as a teacher of children is that democracy is an art that is learned, not taught. Kids learn to be good citizens by practicing citizenship, by actively involving themselves in the democratic process when **their** spirit moves them to do so. Our young people are growing up in a world that is increasingly isolated and cut off from the adult world, and there appears to be no magical transformation that occurs when they reach legal voting age. Just look at national voter turn-out rates (and the quality of the candidates, for that matter) for evidence of this alarming trend.

Finally, let us not forget the wisdom of the old folk tale, 'The Emperor's New Clothes.' Remember that it is a child in the village who finally sees through the charade of the emperor and his court and has the youthful courage to cry out, 'Why he's wearing nothing at all!' '

There are a couple of ideas that I didn't write for the newspaper which certainly belong in this article. One is that unless children have the opportunity to practice democracy on a real and daily basis in school, there is a much greater likelihood that they will become passive and sheep-like citizens when they reach adulthood. For that reason, as well as others, students and teachers at the Free School run the school democratically, utilizing a 'council meeting' system (one part Roberts' Rules of Order, one part Native American council circle) to set policy, make and change rules, and mediate disputes of all kinds. Kids generally run these meetings and they are the heart and soul of what we do together.

Here, the companion idea of community needs to be added to that of democracy to make this whole notion more complete. Neither, I believe, can exist without the other in any meaningful form, and both receive as much attention as is needed on any given day in our school. Like democracy, community—if it is to be more than just a buzz-word paid lip service to—requires daily practices like keeping interpersonal relationships free of stored up resentments and depends on everyone being 100% responsible for the larger body. Obviously, these are ideal statements, and community—like democracy—is at its best an imperfect art. At the Free School our goal is to keep the experiment as alive as we can and learn from our mistakes. Hence the school motto that I coined years ago, "Never a dull moment, always a dull roar!"

Postscript: A week or so after Chris' answer to Ralph Martin came out in the Times Union, he received the following letter from the father of one of our former students who is now in public school:

> Dear Chris,
>
> I just read your article in the newspaper today discussing the issues that Ralph Martin raised concerning the 'use' of children in lobbying, protesting etc. I would like you to know that I am in full agreement with your assertions and would like to thank you for your efforts.
>
> Reading your thoughts in the paper brought me back to the days that my daughter Britt had the great fortune of attending the Free School. Your article is a reflection of the great attention and care, commitment and understanding that is so needed by the children of today's world.
>
> Britt's transition to the public school system has been a great success. She has been maintaining superior grades every year. More importantly though, she has been self-motivated, secure and working to her potential. Her teachers report that she is a wonderful student who participates positively in class.

There are times in everyone's life when perhaps we have doubts and insecurities as to what we are doing. Is it worth it? Am I doing it the right way? What does this really mean in the end? I would like to take this opportunity to let the people at the Free School know that your work is invaluable, appreciated and the effects generated by your endeavors are as a pebble cast into still water. The ripples go on in ways you will never know. Thank you so much and continue the great work.

Sincerely,
Laurin Trainer

Chris Mercogliano, well-known to Coalition members, has been a teacher—now co-director, with his wife Betsy, whose article follows—at The Free School since 1973. He is also a skilled plumber, mason, carpenter, electrician, poet, father, Reichian therapist—and a frequent contributor to ΣΚΟΛΕ. In addition to his school and community duties, he is also deeply involved in ecological activism and has been to India twice, in addition to the trip to Japan. We eagerly await additional articles on his discoveries.

SHARED SPACES

by Betsy Mercogliano

The other day, I went to visit a dragon. This is a very special dragon that lives not too far from the Free School, curled up in the recesses of the other-worldly concrete architecture of the State Museum, often sleeping at the top of the curved, five story staircase that moves from the huge patio that surrounds the building into the darkened eves. I took six four- and five-year olds and we were on a quest—an adventure, we call it. You see, this dragon blesses this area with his smoke and sometimes his fire, being a dragon that cares with a passion about people's lives and people's hearts, wanting to breathe some of his passion into their dreams and their concerns. And he appreciates respect, quiet, and visits from one person at a time. So, whenever we go to visit the dragon, whose smoke we have seen, whose friends we see on top of the Capitol Building and some of the churches and older buildings in Albany, we whisper, once we get to the top of the seventy-stepped staircase that leads to the patio.

We walk together calmly, listening for signs of the dragon's wakefulness—a low humming—and looking for the steam that often drifts out from under the eves of the building, a sure sign that the dragon is home and resting near the entrance to his cave. Then we stop and collect ourselves before we each decide if we want to take a message to the dragon that day.

Back at school, we had had a long discussion about each persons' worries, problems or concerns that they had on their minds that day. This grew out of two kids coming to school that day in a real funk about a situation at home. I always like to help anyone share these issues with other kids as it inevitably blossoms into an animated discussion about the times someone else has felt something similar, had to live through a similar situation or had to solve a similar problem. Kids are pretty open-hearted with each other during these sharings and come up with some great ideas,—everything from, "Well, I go outside and shout really loud," to throwing pillows to sitting in someone's lap at school, to going to the feeling room (a mattress-lined room in the school).

Mostly, the listening and empathy that happens often lightens the burden for the child. There is something about these sharings that moves me a great deal—the quality of really caring, the total listening, the knowing that these things are the important juice of life, the really touching each other, in their own terms, that happens. There is a clarity and depth that I see as an adult that is beautiful—just the truth and the willingness to listen and to share the life space with another person—walk in another's moccasins. Sure, it is not always all there and this group connectedness is something that I 'work on' all year and sometimes it jells and sometimes it doesn't. And sometimes I am aware of asking who is the teacher here! They are teaching me about the naturalness of wanting relatedness and sometimes I am teaching them how to renew these bonds. At its best, it flows.

After a few moments of quiet, someone suggests that we visit the dragon. I ask each child what they would like to say to the dragon today. These are whispered concerns, often almost secrets that they are entrusting to me to help them write on a small piece of paper. Things like, 'Help my grandma get better (from her broken hip), help me to not wet the bed at night, help my dad get a happier job, help me and my sister get along better, I hope you (the dragon) have a long life and help me with my scary dreams, help me not fight with my brother so much.' I write each thought out for them to copy in their own handwriting and then we are off.

Each child has the opportunity to leave their note somewhere on the staircase that goes to the dragon's den. Sometimes it is at the foot of the staircase, sometimes it is halfway up. What happens is that the whole group of us sits a short way away while one person at a time goes up, often talking to the dragon as they go. I make sure each child understands that the rest of us are with them in spirit and thought, because by now they each hold this visit as awe-some and a special, challenging time for them to share some of their deep thoughts, concerns or wishes with something bigger than themselves.

This is somewhat hard for me to put into words, but I just know that a bit of mythological, magical space is needed sometimes in anyone's life to open some doors in our hearts or minds. All I can say is that each time I go with a group of children to see the dragon, and I only go maybe twice a year, I see a new part of each child emerge. It may be courage and clarity of speech from a withdrawn or timid child, it may be true concern about others from a child who tends to be a loner; it may be, often is, deep insight into a personal or family problem—it is **always** amazing. And don't be misled, I take *my* note up to the stairs, too.

Something in this process with the younger children has helped me be a better teacher with most ages of children. Two years ago, I had the opportunity to teach the eleven, twelve and thirteen-year olds here at the Free School. I again felt the need

Reflective Mood in Muskrat

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to find some common ground, some shared spaces for us to be in right from the beginning. I often try to get back what being a certain age felt like for me, and this particular age had lots of physical challenges for me. So much was changing!

Many mornings, I would just sit and talk with this group about whatever was going on for them and we would invariably launch into a discussion about what they liked or didn't like about being twelve, what they missed about being eight, how it was different, etc. I did a lot of active listening as well as sharing my memories of those years, to the chortles and guffaws and 'you really did that?!' of the group. Then we would often get into a discussion about bodies. Bodies, how they work, why they work, what different parts are for, the feelings within—this is common to all of us and I find myself continually fascinated and brought back to these discussions with just about any age group. I mean, we've all got one, right?

I have learned over the years, especially from Mary Leue (the founder of The Free School) that being willing to talk about **just about anything** in a sensitive, respectful and open way is a core of any relationship with kids. If they sense that I am willing to share the knowledge and experience of just having been there (their age) before, as well as having been around longer to have learned a few new ways of being with life's twists and turns, without competing or moralizing, and with honest respect for their uniqueness and the reality that they are my teachers, too, we tend to have some pretty lively discussions.

We usually would go from discussion to some kind of exploration—getting the microscope out to find out just what blood cells, cheek cells, hair, banana, onion look like, taking turns being blind and being guided around the neighborhood by another person in the class, standing on a four foot high platform and falling into the arms of the other kids—backwards and with our eyes closed—watching an interview with Magic Johnson and 15 kids, 4 of whom were HIV positive and talking about the feelings that arose as well as what each person really knew about AIDS.

I guess the core of all this is that I love to explore inner and outer spaces with kids and I let them know that I am willing to let them lead me sometimes into their curiosities, dark spaces, magic spaces - and they learn to trust me to take them places, too. Maybe it is all about trust—that is certainly where we all begin on this planet—maybe it is the only true beginning to any relationship.

I am writing this article because I want to share some of what I do to create a shared space with kids. It is in this place that we explore the edges of our worlds, both inner and outer, I have discovered. I never knew this was where I would be headed with teaching. I don't think I even knew that this is really the juice of teaching—to lead out from each other the questions, the insights, the profound queries that make this living continually fascinating, frustrating, challenging and invigorating. And I never understood how much teaching is about being in a relationship—with deep inner self concerns and with others—pulsing back and forth, open and closed, inner and outer, teacher and learner. I didn't realize that I would be trying on four year old moccasins, twelve year old moccasins as well as my worn ones from years ago - and discovering that I could walk a ways in them and get a fresh look at life each time.

Betsy Mercogliano is or has been at various times co-director, treasurer, cook and teacher in the Free School Betsy is also a direct-entry midwife and labor coach at our birth center, Matrix, and is writing a book about her experiences.

CREATIVITY

by Charlene Therrien

It was poetry that finally got me teaching full time at the Free School. Over the five or six years that my children had been at the school I had been a parent volunteer and even a substitute teacher at times but I had never recognized the possibility of my being a 'real' teacher. Indeed, the idea of myself as a teacher at all was one that grew gradually over the years. I was as stuck in the very narrow societal definition of 'teacher' as anyone else, until one day, I brought in some of my poetry books and sat down with some kids and began to read to them and to encourage them to write their own poetry. And they did. And they asked me when I could come again. I was so thrilled that I arranged to be in school one day a week to read and write poetry with whomever wanted to do it.

I had been writing poetry since 9th grade and was aware of how powerful a tool it had been in my life. My love had been sparked when I wrote my first poem and received encouragement from a teacher whose own inner fire had caught mine. She read my poem to the class and it changed my life. I don't even remember her name because she was only there a short time, but I will never forget her. So here I was on the other end of that dynamic and I so much enjoyed watching the fire jump from one to another that I asked to be a full time teacher at the Free School. Perhaps I wanted to find out what other things might be joyful for me. But it was definitely my heart that led me to this decision. I began in January of 1986, a new year.

Right from the start, to my utter amazement, I was treated as a full fledged member of the working body of the Free School. People valued my opinion and supported me when appropriate. This scared me a little and delighted me also. It sure felt right even though I couldn't recall ever having experienced this before. I felt respected and also responsible. In this atmosphere my own creativity blossomed.

I think it is the element of respect/responsibility that enables people to tap into their own juice. I tell children who are first starting out, "There is a place inside of you where the poetry comes from and it's all yours." It belongs to them. It isn't mine and I'm really clear about that. It's sort of like being a midwife. I love life in this form so much that I guide from experience and intuition but always with awe. Although I encourage them to share, they may choose not to. I will help them to get some start-

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Alyssa, one of our young poets, being coifed by Debbie— she appears to be enjoying the attention!

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er words by using a simple breathing pattern if they like, suggesting to them that the word or picture or idea will just come into their mind as they exhale. Or they can just sit down and start cranking it out. I will always do the writing if they want to dictate. In fact, no matter what their level of writing skill, some kids really appreciate this. I think it helps them to stay with the tenderness or passion or clarity of their material if they don't have to think so much in the way that one needs to in order to carry out the operation of writing.

The experience of contacting their inner knowing in this way is so valuable that I consider it one of the most important things I do in my life. The intangible in them is brought into a form of their own making which is often a revelation to them and a pleasure to others. I love it when a child who has difficulty mastering reading or writing discovers that they are a particularly gifted poet. This happens often. Beauty just flows when unimpeded by judgments about competence. In fact, I suspect that expressing the "wonder-full" is, for them, just a higher priority than learning the techniques of language arts and that in being "unable" to learn to read or write the voice of their own integrity is speaking loud and clear in favor of a more important agenda. So many times it is through their heartfelt desire to read their own poetry that they begin to overcome their so-called lack of success in reading. It is the fact that poetry is itself a language art that makes it so valuable in this way. For some kids it is success with words where no success has been had before. In our traditional school system, self-negating beliefs are the inevitable result of homogenization, labeling and the gross lack of respect for individuality. These beliefs can be powerfully challenged and dispelled in a way that is hard to beat. I'm thinking here of a former student of mine who had come to us from a painfully unsuccessful school experience. He was still struggling with reading and writing at the age of ten. He had been labeled and managed and he was very angry. But when we composed Haiku he dictated, in two minutes, the top winning entry in that year's city-wide contest. I'm thinking of that boy's smile and the look in his eyes. This process of bringing forth their own beauty prepares them for so many other opportunities. Through it they begin to feel in charge of themselves, and they begin to contact their own power in a very self-supportive way.

As a young woman I found out for the first time in my life that there was something of value that was mine alone to bring into the world. It became a springboard for relationship, a safety valve for taboo feelings, a creative vent, a source of genuine self-esteem and tremendous joy. Only when I was ready did I chose to go public and only in doses that I could handle without giving myself away. It was and still is a delicate issue for me because of my early conditioning. I want to feel acknowledged from the outside in as well as from the inside out. This is really the key. I have received praise in my life but only when it makes sense to me is it of any value. This is a very important issue. I never call someone a wonderful poet. I am careful to say how their poetry makes me feel. The truth is that their poetry does make me feel and this I love! They beam and can't wait to show me the next one.

Those who choose to can also become published, do readings and/or enter contests. Many Free Schoolers have won awards. This year seven out of eleven children who chose to enter a city-wide poetry contest won prizes and awards, including a five year old who won a $50 savings bond. As all of us in the Free School grow, we are offered more and more chances to come face to face with ourselves, and many situations serve as mirrors. Some are unavoidable, such as feedback from others in relationship. But some are totally optional. And some are just too good to pass up, like preparing to travel to a conference, although the pitfalls are never obvious from the start. Having a strong pathway to our place of inner wisdom is a prerequisite for developing many of the skills that we need to have if we are to become the creative, care-full, aware adults who will, in turn, respect the wisdom of Mother Earth. The people in our school operate out of radiating levels of community in which we are encouraged and empowered by each other to become who we are: original creations capable of revealing the divine.

Charlene Therrien has made an indispensable place for herself both in the school and the community, as a teacher - of poetry-making and other delights - and as a parent and community member.

LITERARY OUTBURSTS:

TRUTH
by Alyssa Zienkowicz

Blue skies vanish
In dark blackening skies
Thunder bolts out
I feel alone in darkness
Cries of help are heard
from a distance
But I am free at last

A POEM
by Monique Roberts

In the day
I see bluebirds flying
in the sky
I walk down to the pond
and I see the pond flowing
with beautiful water
I see farther away
a garden
full of flowers
I pick a tulip and a violet
for my mother
I go home
I look in the mirror
and I see myself
as a blossoming flower

I WISH
by Elisha Mittleman

I wish my grandmother would sit
by the fire
and rock
and tell me stories
I wish I was young again
sometimes
That's what
I wish

I'm a big girl now

and I'm proud
Sometimes I wish I was older
than I am
but that will come
someday
and I will like it

A POEM
by Eve Minehan

the branch of a glistening tree
with powerful fluorescent green leaves
flowing with the strength
of a lightning bolt
with roots the size of giant's finger
ready to burst

MY DREAM
by Lily Mercogliano

I knew I was flying high
but when I told all my family
all they said was,
' Go to bed.'
but I knew that all they meant was
'Don't be silly.
You cannot fly.'
but I knew that I was flying
just that night.

A POEM
by Gabrielle Becker

when the rainbow shines
the sun comes up
and then I go outside
with my silver spoon
and I sit on the log
and the nothing sits on the chair
then I get out my keys
unlock the lock
and go down in the tunnel
there is no window
there is no sun
there is just nothing

nothing at all
I come out of the tunnel
the sunset is so red
I raise my spoon in the air
I go over the bridge
I stop to look at the stream
it flows so beautiful

"WHADDYA MEAN, FREE?"

by Mary Leue

It sometimes helps to try to see our country and its institutions in a historical prospective, if we are to understand trends in any degree of depth. This article attempts to bring that prospective into focus as a backdrop for what we in alternative education are about—which actually translates into 'This is what *I* believe,' since in our neck of the woods, a thousand alternative educators add up to a thousand different beliefs.

Casting my mind back to the late 1960s and early 70s brings up a great wave of nostalgia and sadness. We were so romantic then, so sure we knew what was wrong and how to make it better! Revolution was in the air: the freedom rides in the South, the civil rights marches and the peace marches, the Black Panthers, the 'Chicago Eight,' the Cambodia crisis, Kent State, the assassinations of so many of the key figures in the dream both rung our hearts and stirred up our passions for reform.

Such excitement! We knew who are enemies were and we clung fiercely to our friends. So many wrongs which had been allowed to flourish unchecked in our beloved country were finally going to be set right! Injustices for toward the poor in general, blacks in particular, and finally, the plight of the ultimate minority—women and children—were going to be acknowledged and a new system based on justice introduced into the mainstream of American education. 'Free the children!' was the cry.

I myself was of an earlier generation, having been born just as the First World War ended, but was experiencing my own youthful freedom for the first time, never having really accepted the version of adult life that had been held out to me during my own young adulthood in the late 30s and early 40s. Having personally gone through the relative stultification of enforced conformity, sitting for hours at desks screwed down to the floor in rows, I knew at firsthand how big a price in stifled creativity I had paid for doing well within the system. It was easy for me to extrapolate such a fact to the experience of the bodies, minds, and spirits of all tender little children suffering through the daily sterility of somebody else's rules and regulations, while we sang about living in the 'land of the free.'

'Whaddya mean, free?' was the title we gave to a workshop we put on in 1972 to introduce our brand of education to the public. Another, offered at the university, we entitled

'Children of the Broken Dream,' meaning the dream of a chicken in every pot, a car in every garage—the dream of universal material prosperity. We wanted to build a new America, nothing less!—and America based on a return to the principles of the founding fathers—on real democracy, individual freedom and justice. We began with the children, since we 'knew' that all the troubles started in childhood, and that school was one of the root causes of what was wrong. Little 'free schools' sprang up all over the country.

Our 'gurus,' Jonathan Kozol, John Holt, Paul Goodman, George Dennison, Herb Kohl, *et al*, gave us all sorts of perspectives on what needed changing, but in the beginning, they (like ourselves) were more focused on what was wrong, on what didn't work—and how much better almost anything else would be - then on what to put in its place. John Holt went in the direction of 'unschooling,' of 'growing without schooling,' as the only truly authentic answer to the issue of society versus the individual, of what you might call conformity versus creativity. From this prospective, he became the chief source of inspiration and support to a whole crop of young families who had come to the conclusion that they themselves had more to give their children than the institutions run by the society. Ironically, this home schooling group comes mainly from the social element which already have within themselves the resources and options to 'make it' in American society—like the hippy group which set up communes and rural free schools, which Jonathan Kozol criticized in his fiery diatribe *Free Schools* as being politically obscene in the face of the universal neglect and mass suffering of our unseen ghetto dwellers within the cities.

Being good Americans, we focused our attention on money, or the lack thereof, as the culprit when and if things went badly in our schools. When we gathered at various regional get-togethers to compare notes on how it was going, we spent a lot of attention on the issue of funding—how to get grants, how to raise money, how to attract parents and teachers if you didn't have enough money to put into the enterprise. I think it was easier to try to solve this problem (which most of us couldn't or didn't) than to look more searchingly at issues like *what kind of society are we working to create?* How does what we are doing fit into our ultimate aspirations for our children? Is it OK with us if they choose to become members of the lower class when they grow up? Do we want them to end up like us, in the middle class, with middle-class aspirations? What kinds of things are they going to choose when they arrive at the age of choice? How does the acquisition of basic skills fit into the picture?

What is education, anyway? Does teaching in an 'alternative' school actually boil down to indoctrinating children with the 'alternative' virtues of vegetarianism, sexual promiscuity, wearing ragged clothes or none at all, playing as opposed to work, 'hanging loose and mellow' as opposed to getting frustrated or angry, 'doing your own thing' as opposed to learning to take other people into consideration? We were very romantic about the whole thing, it seems, looking back.

But whatever the rights or blind spots of the 'movement,' somehow the Democratic Convention in Chicago of 1968 seems to me to have been a kind of watershed of idealism versus reality. Something of hope died watching our young people being clubbed *en masse* by the Chicago police out in the streets while cynical politicians bartered away the spirit of truth and justice inside the hall. Nothing has felt quite the same since then. I'm not saying that's bad—just different. We are perhaps franker, more honest, about addressing primarily our own personal interests than we were before that climatic event. As the romantic, reforming passion more and more came up against the realities of American life, its momentum gradually turned more and more inward, to apply chiefly to people's own families and the families of like-minded people.

Social and Personal Realities

I suppose my quarrel with most educational programs, no matter how 'holistic' or humanistic they may be and I include 'alternative' education within this category, for the most part—is that they are only as good or as bad, as efficacious or maladaptive as the society in which they are set. We are all products of that society including its schools and colleges, its industrial-consumer economy, and the hideously and artificially hyped-up standard of living which we Americans and those other nations which have adopted our way of greed and waste have chosen to believe it is perfectly moral and workable, even though its ravages lie about us and the tortured faces of its fallout victims, mostly non-white women and little children, appear nightly on our TV screens. We are all subject to the value judgments of this society from within ourselves, when we set out either to teach or to teach teachers. No matter what level we choose to focus on within the educational field, it all comes back in the end to who we, each one of us, is as a person. In this respect, programs techniques - perspectives on teaching and learning can become tools or weapons, defensive or offensive, shields or mirrors. In the end, it boils down to 'thee and me' set in the framework of whatever the institution is which keeps us alive on the earth.

Wilhelm Reich, that amazing, multi-faceted pioneer in somato-psychoanalysis and its relationship to life on earth, understood, as no one else involved with learning and development has seemed to me to understand, the direct relationship between teacher and learner as a function of personal wholeness, of biological wellness, as well as social or perceptual understanding. His concept of developmental self-regulation as a rule of thumb still seems to me a primary criterion of educational success. I *don't* mean by 'self-regulation' the travesty of ideological, child-centered permissiveness which passes for true self-regulation. Children are very acute, and pick up whatever hidden messages parents are passing on to them, and often exploit adults—or are themselves exploited—by such unacknowledged attitudinal values. What I mean is allowing children the space to explore what they want for themselves, choosing or refusing to choose, learning by choosing. Call it self-regulation or self-governance. To me it is an essential part of any learning situation. It is all too easy for teaching to become something which fits the comfort and convenience of the teacher, without her/his in the noticing it.

We are, of course, creatures long latency learning period, and it is pretty difficult to sort out the base level biological learning from the acculturated overlay. So, in this sense, I am not advocating a return to a romantic ideology of the 'noble savage,' or some other Rousseauvian model. But leaving out of account the 'wisdom of the body,' as Walter Cannon (the great pioneering physiologist of the autonomic nervous system) called it, in favor of more operational, rule-centered considerations in defining educational goals and practices seems to me simply putting new wine into old bottles. And that can apply to any pre-defined educational system, whether Waldorf, Montessori, progressive, parochial—or even alternative! Children of my generation recognize the iron fist in the velvet glove of Dewey-inspired, 'project-centered' progressive programs as easily as they had the old ways of teaching the three Rs when they were carried out by teachers whose personal feelings were not in their work. But the old ways had worked with whole-hearted teachers, too!

What I am saying is that knowing what works in education is really important, but failing to carry out an educational program in a whole-hearted, authentic manner can kill the best of programs.

The question is not always just 'What works?' But also 'Why does it work?' John Potter, a leader in the small schools network and director of Somerset School in Washington, DC, says that almost anything works well that is not too large (see *his* *address to the Small Schools Conference on page 76 above*). Big institutions dwarf individuals. So I am not claiming educational success for 'alternative education' via a universal practice of Reichian principles in these schools. At least, not as such. Simply being small and having to struggle together to survive creates an atmosphere in which children thrive! But when one quotes Reich's saying which appears in virtually every one of his books—'Love, work and knowledge are the well spring of life; they should also govern it.'—it is my belief that you go pretty far toward defining a way of being that opens a space for real relationship, out of which learning can grow. And when you take A. S. Neill's self-governance by children, not just for them, as an implementation of Reichian principles, exciting things happen in schools. I wouldn't want to work in a school that didn't understand this as a first principle.

So, in answer to my own initial question, 'Whaddya mean, free?' I guess I would answer, being true to yourself, letting the chips fall where they may, taking your lumps in consequence and learning thereby.

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THE FREE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AS LEARNING RESOURCE FOR CONSCIOUS LIVING

by Mary M. Leue

I want to start with a kind of footnote. What most of you may not know is that about three weeks ago John presented a magnificent workshop in Albany on the day before his keynote speech at the State Association of School Boards conference. Chris Mercogliano, the co-director of our school, was all set to give John a glowing introduction—but John, being John, and not knowing that, just dove in and started ahead on his own. So I'd like to deliver Chris' introduction for him. I think it's a terrific statement about John, too good to waste. Chris wrote it out for me, so here it is.

> The other day I found myself telling some of the younger kids at school the old folk tale The Emperor's New Clothes. You probably remember that it was a child in the village who cried out, "He has nothing on at all!," thereby breaking the thick spell of denial being paraded by the emperor and all of his loyal—and frightened—subjects. Well, there is a magical child alive and well inside John Gatto who is the source of his giftedness as a teacher, and who is now hell-bent on seeing to it that our schools do not grind the magic out of yet another generation of our children. John is a man with a mission, and I pray that the spell that has settled over our teachers and our educational institutions has not already become so widespread that it cannot be broken. If anyone can do it, John and his growing band of merry men and women can!

In the sense that Chris is using the term, I believe we are all magical children, now grown up. It is to be hoped that we still remember our childhoods and thus can stay open to allowing *our* children to grow up living out their magical heritage, not just grow up to become unconscious products of our own pasts as so many adults have done. And in this context, I need here to pay a special tribute to my most important personal teachers—my mother and father, the two most remarkable people I have ever known. They read to us throughout all the years of our childhood, taught us wilderness skills, recognition of birds, wild plants and trees, and geological features of the land. With them we went camping, ocean sailing, mountain-climbing, rock-climbing and skiing. From them I have learned whatever I may have of love of learning, respect for childhood, courage, integrity, curiosity, persistence, discrimination, and cultural breadth. It was at their insistence that I graduated from high school on the high honor roll, from Bryn Mawr College with an A.B. degree, and from the Children's Hospital School of Nursing in Boston, Massachusetts. Their lessons are still bearing fruit for me.

At our school we recognize our debts to many educators from the past who understood childhood: such as the eighteenth century thinker Jean Jacques Rousseau; his contemporary, the Swiss Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, whose beliefs were brought to America by Joseph Neef in 1808; Friedrich Froebel, who worked with and adopted Pestalozzi's insights about childhood as the basis for his concept of children as needing to grow like flowers in a carefully tended garden—a garden of children. The rich experiences provided for children by the Waldorf schools that follow the teachings of Rudolph Steiner are another source from which we draw, as well as the insights of Maria Montessori and John Dewey. Most immediately, we take inspiration from the self-regulatory libertarianism of A.S. Neill and the humanistic insights into the souls of the children of the ghetto contained in the writings of George Dennison.

We believe that working with children demands a trained and very keen eye and ear attuned to one's inner truth as well as a willingness to live in the child's own world as a participant observer. In the world that is emerging around us, this need for self-knowledge seems to us to go all too often unmet. We believe it is this unmet need to know ourselves at a deep level which is the chief missing ingredient in a cultural dilemma that is approaching crisis stage as our traditional support systems—the family and the community—break down at an accelerating rate. We are becoming inundated as a society by a tidal wave of acute problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction, criminality and psychosis—as well as characterological problems like co-dependency, narcissism, sociopathy, neurosis and chronic physiological imbalances of all sorts.

This breakdown process has been defined by John Bradshaw, among others, as arising from the neglect of the feelings—the grief, rage and fear—felt by the neglected inner child and has suggested that it is this neglect which creates such

Mary Leue giving her speech (this photo and the one of John speaking taken by Connie Frisbee- Houde)

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havoc in our adult lives. This might be called the negative side of the magic of childhood. The damage even involves our societal patterns of giving birth—not just the education of our children in schools. Michel Odent, a French research-minded obstetrician has had many years of working with, rather than against, the wisdom of the natural body during birth. His work demonstrates the madness of our technologized system of obstetrical management which has resulted in nearly half of all hospital births ending in Cesarean section. It is to this entire range of issues that we in our school and our community are attempting to address ourselves.

Thus, during the 22 years of our existence, we have grown from a handful of parents who had a dream of democratic education and started a little school in the inner city of Albany in 1969, to a multi-generational community with the school as its center. Everything we have grown to be in those two-plus decades has come into being in response to needs we have experienced as essential to a model of life that makes sense in human terms, a model that works. In this process we have grown rich! No, not in monetary terms, but in the real values that make life a vital experience.

Our school is one of the oldest urban free schools in the country. In the setting of this all-embracing community, the Free School is far more a community center and less a traditional institution. We don't select children; we accept whoever comes. Similarly, we don't hire teachers; we accept whoever comes. Then we teach them how to be with us. Our community has a simple criterion for evaluating those who are drawn to us: namely, that they take us seriously enough to come, stay and learn. Most of our teachers have lived in the community for ten years or more.

Learning flows naturally out of the community atmosphere and is much less a goal in itself. Skills learning—which the children love—takes very little time in the total scheme, and activities such as putting on plays, making puppets, singing, doing sports, watching movies, reading out loud, playing games, and doing crafts, take up most of it. The adults have as much fun as the children, and staff burnout is unknown among us. One very important element we offer our children, both by experience and by example, is an awareness that "You can do it!" Children who leave us after two or three years have a rare natural sense of confidence, dignity and leadership.

But the school is only one setting for the learning activities in which our children are involved, just as we, the adults in the community, are only some of the people from whom

Free School kids posed by a photographer to demonstrate their involvement with the farm aspect of the school—so much for spontaneity! They loved it!

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our kids are free to learn or take inspiration. We have a small farm in the community, and kids help take care of our animals. We have two hundred acres of wilderness land recently donated to the school which is now part of our lives and will be even more so as time goes by and our presence there becomes even more a daily part of who we are.

Wilhelm Reich said, "Love, work and knowledge are the wellsprings of life. They should also govern it." The principles by which our community lives and by which it is governed are indeed love, work and knowledge. Two things could be said to define us as a community: **work democracy** and **total mutual support** for families.

The term *work democracy,* coined by Reich, is used to describe criteria for community on the basis of need and obligation. It is a pragmatic definition of peer-level status among adults and between adults and children, both in the community and in the school.

Total mutual support means that everyone in the community plays roles usually assigned to specialists. That has meant taking on many more roles than most people think of doing, as a way of simplifying our lives as a community. We all teach, take care of one another's children, doctor them, take responsibility for their behavior, look upon them as our joint responsibility. We do the same things with each other, as families, and gradually we have taught ourselves how to play all of these roles more effectively .

We have learned through experience what community problems to tackle ourselves and what to leave to someone with specialized skills. And we have learned ways that work better than the societally approved ones in the crucial areas of maternity, parenting, and education. Taking over these support roles as we have has meant that our very limited incomes go a lot further than one would expect—and that we work very hard. But over time, we have also learned to increase our joint prosperity and pleasure in other ways.

We have a monthly parenting support group and a cooperative prenatal support group for pregnant couples as well as labor coaching in the hospital. And we have developed a number of additional group resources that allow us to focus on improving our relationship patterns, including personal growth and growth as couples and as parents. We have, for example, a weekly therapeutic group that serves many community functions and, most crucially, gives us a way of steadily deepening our contact with one another.

Six years ago we set up a pooled investment, insurance and loan group of the kind usually called a 'Mondragon' group which has provided community families with improvement loans of various kinds and has also paid a large part of our teachers' medical expenses. We also have our own natural foods store at discount prices, a small bookstore, a library, and a large audio and video tape library, as well as a wooden boat-building shop and a clothing manufacturing business owned by members of the community. One of our families is also a husband-wife legal firm, and two of us who are RN.'s as well as teachers also play the roles of barefoot doctor and triage agent.

Finding money to live on has always been a joint responsibility, since the school belongs to us all. The school doesn't really pay salaries to its teachers in the sense businesses usually mean by that term; rather, we divide up the income, with adequate allocations for the needs of the property itself. In addition to ten buildings clustered in a two-block area of downtown Albany owned by the school (income from which constitutes about two-thirds of the school's economic base), families in some way associated with the school own an additional ten buildings in the area and consider themselves part of the Free School community.

Beside describing our school and community in terms of what we *do*, I want also to emphasize my belief that it has been important for us to understand *why* we do what we do, not just *that* we do it. We are all engaged in an on-going process of creating a model of life that includes adults in families, includes adult activities and skills practiced right in the community, and includes teaching kids adult models in both characterological and occupational forms. Like the saying attributed to Dewey, we are learning to do by doing.

So why is it important to ask why we do it? What's wrong with just doing? What's wrong is lack of awareness—or mindfulness, to use the Buddhist expression. Being members of the society of the industrialized west, most of us are functional extraverts, and as such, are largely incapable of serving as adequate models for children, we believe. Our own learned inner models of reality which operate *beneath* the level of "doing" have far more of an impact on kids than most of us feel comfortable in acknowledging, yet there is very little institutional support for becoming aware of this level of experience which comes primarily from the culture of our parents, and can only be discovered by the development of inner knowing on our own. Often acquiring such inner knowing involves a willingness to feel one's residual pain.

Free School Kids Choosing Their Own Learning Actiuvities

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And yet, both as parents and as teachers, we teach *who we are*, not just what we think or what we give children to do. Many titular adults are unwilling to take this fact into account when they are dealing with children. We fail to compare what we may *think* we are teaching kids with what they are actually *getting* from us. Doing that involves a willingness to stay attuned to our inner truth no matter how painful that may be, as well as a willingness to live in the child's own world as participant observers, not just follow a model.

It is in this sense that we consider ourselves a multi-generational learning community. We take what we need to learn from our own histories to round out our experiences of ourselves as fully conscious beings; and we do our best to use the learnings derived from our individual histories to help in the process of creating a shared future for everyone both as individual families and as a community. It's not a way that works for everyone - but perhaps it is a little like what Joe Campbell says of marriage: "Marriage" he says, "is not about happiness but about transformation." Or as one of our own members said recently, "It's like having twenty lovers!"

This article was originally presented as a speech at "The Exhausted School" program presented on November 11th, 1991, at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

MARY LEUE is the founder of The Free School in Albany, New York, and is an editor of ΣΚΟΛΕ.

THE PLANET SCHOOL IN KYOTO, JAPAN

Note: It seemed worthwhile including the description of The Free School in Albany, New York, even though our school has been described above, since Keiko-san is presenting her own images of what we do to the Japanese reading public, a subject of potential value to Americans as well.

THE FREE SCHOOL AND THE PLANET SCHOOL
by Keiko-san Yamashita, Kyoto, Japan

The Free School

The Free School in Albany, New York, is located in the old part of the city. It could be called a homeschool; that is its feeling tone. Mary, its founder, has both creative energy and a strong will.

The school originated in the actual needs of the everyday life of people. Mary told us that the on-going life of a school is based on an artistic attitude toward life coupled with an accompanying sense of the potentialities involved in immediacy.

The school includes many activities:

1. A family birth center
2. A natural foods store
3. A small publishing business
4. Participation in the peace movement
5. A meditation class
6. Rainbow Camp
7. Its own internal economy

In the beginning, the children involved were Mary's son and three other children whose families supported the children's own bad feelings about their experiences in public school. And so, the school began in Mary's house. A representative from the public school told them to return the children to public school, but the parents did not wish to comply.

When Mary's family began to object to the school's use of their house, they found a new place.

Over the years of the school's existence there have been many problems to be solved in order for it to continue, and everyone involved has worked very hard, put a great deal of deep thinking into problem- solving, and has learned the importance of encouraging one another.

They first acquired an old school building in downtown Albany very inexpensively, and then several more old buildings, also for very little money, since the entire area was in decline and was lived in only by the very poor. They fixed up the old buildings and began renting out apartments.

The first floor of the school itself consists of elementary classrooms; the second floor is play nursery, a large meeting room and the kitchen. The children's parents built a jungle gym playground in the back yard. The members of the school community live near the school.

The school itself has never sought out people to hire as teachers. It has a free breakfast program for poor children.

Mary told us (at a Kyoto gathering in January, 1991, of Japanese families and teachers interested in alternative education at which Chris Mercogliano and I spoke about our school and our philosophy of education) that children need good, well-prepared, warm food in order to develop the habits and attitudes of good health and well-being.

The school also functions as a community center; as participants in the life of the community, the children have an opportunity to learn about the actual problems that exist in the world around them. For example, in the last two years the children became actively involved in

- a New York state issue involving the release of a native American man from extradition proceedings back to North Carolina;
- a project in Puerto Rica helping to rebuild houses destroyed by hurricane Hugo on Vieques Island.
- an environmental activist action protesting (successfully!) a municipal proposal to build a new power plant across the river from the school.

When I (Keiko-san) visited the school, I saw a poster on a classroom wall protesting racial discrimination, from seeing which I formed a sense of the school's atmosphere of teaching the children about the world.

The Planet (Wakusei) School

The Planet School (Keiko-san's school in Kyoto) is a place where the issue of war is discussed every day. It is true that everyone is against war, but we believe the real question to be addressed is how we achieve the state of peace. This is what I would like to speak about.

There are many ways of looking at this question. Recently, we—the five or six children who come to the school and our teachers—began realizing something important about how this may be taught. We go out to play near a hill every day, and this day, on returning, we talked together about the question of peacefulness and saw that when the children are playing there, they aren't fighting. This fact seemed unaccountable to us until we also saw that it is when the children have become totally absorbed in their game on the hill, there is no fighting. When their bodies are surrounded by the natural environment, they have peaceful feelings.

The Wakusei (Planet) School has developed a plan for taking this learning out into the world. We climb the hill and invite people to come and teach the children on Tuesdays and Fridays. We have found that if you teach the children that anyone is welcome to visit our school, they have to be more aware of themselves as individuals. The adults, for their part, can see that the children are full of life, and are also thinking and acting to understand our problem of peace and war. One of our teachers explained, "Although they are children, they are busy thinking about this, the most important problem we have, and working to understand it in terms of the facts of history."

And so, I hope that this study will help them to grow up living close to life itself. Mary told us that life always flows like a river. What we do is not difficult. We only have to realize who we are as human beings and to live a life of truthfulness and honesty.

Keiko-san Yamashita herself is a beautiful person who embodies and lives her own philosophy. Her children are truly fortunate to be a part of her beautiful life energy!

This account, copied from an article by her in a Japanese publication, was sent to us by Keiko-san and translated by Hiromi Ota, a Japanese intern at The Free School during the second half of 1991.

INTERVIEW WITH YAMASHITA KEIKO

by Kathy Arlyn Sokol And Stephen Suloway

For The Kyoto Journal, Winter 1991

When you were a child, your home was a very interesting place...

Yes. One of the foreigners who boarded with us was Professor Leon Herberts of Columbia University, a Buddhism specialist, and we were very good friends. He used to carry me on his shoulders to the Shinshindo coffee shop, and to the Kyoto University campus, where we would do things like cleaning Buddha images together. We had lots of fun together. Later his students came over from New York and stayed in our house. They were all beatniks, and some of them were interested in Zen. One of them used to go to school, and everywhere else, with his head covered up by a basket-type hat, like a *komuso* Zen priest. There was one Frenchman, an artist, who was always getting drunk and having trouble with the police. One student was a very nervous type and we would quarrel because I liked to tap my feet on the floor when I was studying. I realized when I was still very young that my outlook on life was going to be pretty different from other kids.

What do you remember most about your early education?

Definitely not school. My grandmother never insisted that I go to school. She thought school was only a sort of diversion. But attending dance class regularly was a given in my house, which had its own studio. The studio served as not only a place to practice but as a salon where the foreign students, my grandmother, the teachers and I would muse on the transforming state of tradition. It was a very small, special society that held art and craft above academic education.

Thirty years ago in Kyoto that was a more commonly held view. Each family transferred the knowledge of their life's experience directly to their own children. The prime educating institutions were the family and the neighborhood. For at least ten years after the war, the Mombusho was still in a confused state and had not yet regulated the schools throughout Japan. School was not society.

Yet you went on to become a public school educator. What were your motivations?

I've been a teacher for nearly half my life. While attending Otani University, I was already teaching Japanese classical dance to more than 30 students. After graduating from university with a degree in Japanese folklore, I got married, had a child and then went on to get a certificate in elementary school education. I've been working with young children ever since.

During my first years in the Kyoto public school system I strove to become a model Mombusho teacher. I taught the official textbooks thoroughly within a short time. I organized my time well. I raised obedient students. I was told that classroom control must come first, that the most important thing the child has to learn is how to take instructions. I wanted to be a technical teacher. I was friendly and speedy. There was always something to do in my classroom. There was no time for the children to think, only to memorize.

But as more children with learning disabilities entered my class, I began to realize that adherence to technical and theoretical formulations were too often inadequate to get through to them. Then I understood that teaching is not a technique to be learned, it is an art to be developed with patience, warmth and humanity as the essential elements.

The students were receptive to my humanistic approach, but the school administrators were not. As is the Japanese preferred method, I was never confronted directly about my philosophical shift, but instead was made to feel uncomfortable in my position. So I switched over to special education classes, where I had more freedom to try out my own ideas. Many parents supported me, many want an alternative. But in Japan there is no choice.

That's when you decided to leave the public school system?

Yes. I felt that there was no future for me there. To me, the Japanese public school system is like a big tree which is rotting away from within.

So, I've recently planted my own tree, the Planet School, where I am trying for a balance between traditional educational values and what the world now requires: full human beings who are aware of their body, spirit and mind. My school is for those who have found the competition in the public schools too stifling, children who simply can't cope or choose not to. And there seem to be more and more of them. A recent poll in Tokyo found that over 50% hate going to school .

Many teachers who sympathized with my views were critical of my leaving the public school system. They felt that I should stay, persevere, try to change the system from within. But the growing numbers of dissatisfied students need an alternative now. My school is not primarily academic, but instead serves fundamental individual human needs. If it achieves its aims, others will take notice and begin to change their educational philosophies .

Obedience and good test scores have been the mark of excellence of the student. The highest value has been placed on conforming. But human beings are individual and they are unique. It is only an illusion Japanese society maintains that individual differences are not significant. Japan is now part of a global community. It has to accept peoples of other nationalities, and it also must accept the differences among its own people. In our school we have an international viewpoint, but at the same time we stand firmly on Japanese traditions such as dance and art. This is the kind of alternative I am trying to create. Our schools have thus far inculcated traits which are not only wrong, they are destructive to mankind and to the earth. Education is a process of living, not a preparation for future living.

Before you opened your school, you spent a year observing alternative schools in America. What were your impressions?

I also visited some regular public schools in several states, and I was surprised to find that in some ways they are just like Japanese public schools. They make the students line up and walk down the corridors in perfect order. and they give them only 20 minutes to eat lunch. I was impressed by the smaller class sizes, usually 20 to 30 students: in Japan you often have 45 students in a first-grade class. I also noticed that the students are allowed to sit any way they want to in class, slumping in their chairs or resting on their elbows, which is never allowed in Japan, and I thought it was healthy that teachers call their teacher Mr. or Ms. so-and-so, instead of the intimidating term sensen.

But the alternative schools were the most interesting. I went to an alternative schools conference and announced that I was willing to teach Japanese dance and art and t'ai chi and cooking in exchange for room and board. I got 31 invitations to go all over the country, and I accepted all of them! You know, when Japanese people talk to me about this, they always ask, which one was best? But that's the wrong approach, because each one was different. The best thing was the variety. There was one thing they all had in common though, and that was that each one was a real community center. Not only the parents, but the shops and offices and neighbors around the school all seemed very connected to the school, they always knew everything about it.

Of course I already had a strong grounding in traditional Japanese culture. But when I was in America and I saw that many people there are interested in Buddhism and other Japanese traditions. It reinforced my awareness of the specifically Japanese type of wisdom that we all tend to forget that we have. This strengthened my resolve to emphasize Japanese traditions in my school. Whether they realize it or not, every Japanese family has a store of traditional wisdom and culture that they received from their parents and grandparents and neighbors. Nowadays almost nobody is fully satisfied with the public school system, but most people never stop to think that there is a lot that they can teach at home. Parents should turn off the TV, turn off the family computer, and talk to their kids about their own childhood, and cook with them, and take them to their workplaces. Then they would realize how much they have to teach in the home. And the very best thing that they could do is to travel together as a family, really travel, for much longer than just a few days. Travel is the **best** education .

Yamashita Keiko was born in Kyoto in 1952, during that interval when the will to westernize was not yet internalized by the Kyoto citizenry. She grew up in her grandmother's house, which mirrored the paradoxical state Japan found itself in. Her grandmother, widowed and without money, turned her spacious home into a boarding house for foreigners attending Kyoto University. Meanwhile, Grandmother urged Keiko to become adept in the traditional arts of Japanese dance, shamisen and koto.

THREE ON HOMESCHOOLING:

HOW TO GET AN EDUCATION AT HOME

by Patrick Farenga, Holt Associates

There is a revolution going on in education, but it is not happening in schools. It is happening in the homes of American families in every state. It is happening every time a family decides to help its children learn at home instead of sending them to school! Fourteen years ago there were roughly 10,000 children being homeschooled; now there are upwards of 600,000 children learning at home. If you and your children are not pleased with your schools and you are tired of waiting for them to change, then you can do something *now* and join the growing ranks of people who homeschool.

It is impossible to generalize about the "typical" homeschooling family any more than you can about the "typical" family whose children attend schools. Homeschoolers include traditional, middle-class two parent households, single parents, low income families, families with parents or children who have physical disabilities, and two-income families. Some homeschool solely for religious reasons, some homeschool solely for pedagogical reasons. Many homeschool for mixtures of both reasons, and many others homeschool simply because they enjoy being with their children and watching them learn. Some homeschoolers live on rural communes; others live in midtown Manhattan. Some homeschooling parents have only high school diplomas, others have doctorates. It is not necessary to have a teaching certificate to homeschool effectively. None of these examples are conjectural: families homeschooling under these and other conditions have been writing to us at *Growing Without Schooling* with their stories for over fourteen years. All sorts of people homeschool and you can too.

You might think that homeschooled children are limited by their parents' expertise, experience, and knowledge. If we view teaching as the filling up of empty bottles with the teacher's knowledge, then this concern makes sense. With only one or two people pouring into the child's "bottle" it makes sense that the child will only learn what they pour in. However, homeschooling allows you to depart from the "bottle" model of school learning and follow a different concept of how children learn.

My friend, the late John Holt, wrote about how people learn throughout his ten books about education. He spent the better part of his life demonstrating that we can trust children to learn all the time. John observed that for children under school age, living and learning are interconnected, but once they enter school, the two are separated. Learning is supposed to take place in special buildings called schools, and living takes place outside of school. But from the moment children are born they learn from everything they have access to, not Just from special teachers and places. Children learn to walk and talk with little or no formal teaching from us parents. Several studies have noted that homeschooled children consistently test at or above grade level when compared to their schooled agemates, *regardless* of the degrees attained or teacher certification of their parents. Washington, Alaska, and Alabama are three states that have studied and reported this. This proves not only that we can trust our children to learn, but that we can trust ourselves to be effective teachers for our children

"But I'm not good at math you may be thinking. "How could I be a good homeschooling parent?" First, homeschoolers use a wide variety of resources and learning materials. Some feel more comfortable beginning with a fairly traditional curriculum, and many different ones are readily available. Other families follow a less conventional approach, learning according to their own timetables and taking advantage of individual learning. Many parents find homeschooling greatly stimulates their own thinking and creativity and provides them with new learning opportunities. Homeschoolers also think very hard about friends, relations, neighbors, and co-workers who have expertise in areas their children want to explore. We hear many stories about how nonfamily members offer considerable help with a child's home education. One child decided she wanted to learn more math than her mother was familiar with. Her mother found a math tutor for her. Another story is about how a boy learned a great deal about computer programming from adults he met at his church and through Scouts. Amber Clifford, a sixteen year old homeschooler from Missouri, wrote to us about her interest in archaeology, something, her parents know nothing about.

> I was able to do the reading and studying on my own, but my parents helped me find the resource people that I needed and took me to the places that I needed to see. We're in a town with a university, so when I was interested in fossils, my mother called the geology department and got the professor to talk to me. I didn't know how to go about finding someone, and she did, so this is where she was really helpful to me.

Some of you may feel that the children I am describing are special, that homeschoolers are taking the best and most motivated children out of school and leaving school with the dregs. The fact is that many of the children now flourishing in homeschools *were not* flourishing in school. Some parents began home-schooling children who had been labeled "learning disabled" in school and they watched their children lose their LD behavior. Other homeschoolers have children for whom school was not challenging enough, and they teach them at home using materials and experiences that match their needs. Some homeschooled children are late readers, not learning to read until they are ten or so. Grant Colfax, a homeschooled child who graduated from Harvard and is now in medical school, didn't learn to read until he was nine. Woodrow Wilson, who was homeschooled, learned to read when he was eleven. Children like Colfax and Wilson develop other talents and skills while they are young and when they do learn to read they do so without special difficulty. In school these late readers would be immediately segregated and treated for these academic deficiencies, and they would be held back from other learning opportunities until they could read at their grade level. It is simply not true that all homeschoolers would be winners in school anyway.

Despite the diversity of methods and reasons for homeschooling, there is one thing each and every homeschooler has in common. They are all asked, "How will your children be socialized if they don't go to school?"

Homeschooling allows children to participate and learn in the real world. It allows them to mix with much younger and much older people, take courses as they want or need them, and apprentice with people they can learn from in the community. Homeschoolers play with their friends in their neighborhood and make friends with other homeschoolers. A young homeschooler in Pennsylvania wrote to us about her experiences volunteering at a home for disabled kids; a family from California wrote to us about their son's work in a soup kitchen. Many families write to us about how their children participate in community theater, give music lessons to younger children in their neighborhood, or share hobbies with fellow enthusiasts of all ages. Homeschoolers have apprenticed at historical societies, veterinarians' offices, architectural firms, nature centers, and many other places. Serena Gingold, a homeschooled youngster from California, wrote to us about her involvement in local politics.

> I've written letters to the editor about my opinions. You really learn a lot about opinions when you publicly voice your own. I've also been publicly criticized, and my county fair projects were censored because they were "too political" (actually because I was too political for a kid!). One letter in the paper criticized me for being a kid and having opinions! People always say I should go to school so I can learn about the real world, but I'm *living* in the real world !

Certainly group experiences *are* a big part of education, and homeschoolers have plenty of them. Homeschoolers write to us about how they form or join writing clubs, book discussion groups, and local homeschooling support groups. Homeschoolers also take part in school sports teams and music groups, as well as the many public and private group activities our communities provide. For example, Kristin Williams of Michigan recently wrote to our magazine, *Growing Without Schooling* about how they meet many different types of people. "We're a Black family living in a racially and economically mixed neighborhood," she writes,

> ...We don't really go out looking. for people who are different from ourselves. Many come through the family: a cousin has an Arab-American girlfriend, another had a Japanese mother-in-law, another is married to an Afro-Canadian, one to a Polish-American, still another to a Jamaican and one to a Nigerian.

She writes how through church, 4-H club, and neighbors they have encountered and enjoyed many different types of people. At home they play tapes of foreign music, listen to overseas short-wave radio broadcasts, cook ethnic foods, and go to international fairs and multi-cultural worship services. Homeschoolers can and do experience other people and cultures without going to school.

The flip-side of socialization is solitary reflection. Homeschooling allows children to have some time alone, time to pursue their own thoughts and interests. Children, like adults, need time to be alone, to think, to muse, to read freely, to daydream, to be creative, to form a self independent of the barrage of mass culture.

A British man once remarked to me how amazing it was to him that Americans expect schools to socialize their children. "I always thought the social graces were taught at home," he said.

This observation is supported by a recent study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. This study tracked how childhood experiences—in and out of school—affected adult development over a 36 year period. The study concluded that the only factor that showed a significant effect by itself on children's social maturity and their later social accomplishment as adults was "parental warmth and affection."

You may find that you teach your children at home for just a semester, for a year, or forever. The choice is yours, not school's. The entry or re-entry of homeschooled children into the classroom appears to be no different than for those who transfer into a school from another district.

Homeschooling works because *schooling is not the same as education*. School is not the only place to learn, to grow up. Universities and colleges recognize this fact whenever they admit homeschoolers who have never attended school. Homeschoolers who never attended, or rarely attended, any schools are currently students at Harvard, Boston University, Rice University, and the Curtis Institute of Music, to name a few. In addition, homeschoolers who decide *not* to go to college are finding adult work without special difficulty. Some of the homeschoolers I know who fall into this category are currently employed in the fields of computers, ballet, theater, movies, aviation, construction and overseas missionary work.

Consider these famous people who were homeschooled for some or all of their school years:

- authors William Blake, Charles Dickens, Pearl Buck, Agatha Christie and Margaret Atwood;
- social and political figures Benjamin Franklin, Woodrow Wilson, Winston Churchill, Samuel Gompers, Charles Lindbergh, Florence Nightingale;
- artists Andrew Wyeth, Yehudi Menuhin, Sean O'Casey, Charlie Chaplin, Claude Monet, and Noel Coward;
- inventors Thomas Edison and the Wright brothers.

One of the world's richest men, the man for whom this hall is named, Andrew Carnegie, was homeschooled until he was nine. He was coaxed into attending school after that, but by the age of thirteen Carnegie left school and never went back. School attendance is not the only way to become a successful, sociable adult.

Vita Wallace, a homeschooler from Pennsylvania, wrote these words when she turned sixteen and officially graduated from homeschooling:

The most important thing I think I have gained through my education is that I know what I love to do. I think if I had gone to school I wouldn't have had time to find out. I know it's awfully confusing for people, when after graduating from thirteen years of schooling, they still don't know. ...I've been able to make friends with all kinds of different people - people younger, the same age, and older than I am, my teachers, colleagues and students, my neighbors young and old, my parents' friends, my brothers friends and teachers, and most important, my brother. He's been my best friend all along, and I am so glad we didn't go to school if only for the one reason that we might not have been able to be such bosom buddies otherwise.. .

Homeschooling is not the panacea to all our educational problems, but it *is* part of the answer. It is a proven option for any of you who wish to try it.

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Pat is the coordinator of John Holt Associates, the networking group in Boston, Mass. started by Holt himself—and is John Holt's principal heir. This article was originally presented at "The Exhausted School" Carnegie Hall program in New York City, on November 11, 1991. See additional articles based on their presentations by Dave Lehman, Dan Greenberg, Mary Leue, Kathleen Young and John Taylor Gatto.

John Holt

1923 - 1985

LITERARY OUTBURST:

Quoted from GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING, the following tribute to John Holt was dictated to their mother by Danette, Bridget and Socorro Finn, ages seven, six and four. It is the best memorial tribute to John Holt I have ever heard, and never fails to move me to tears!

John was a good friend. He seemed like family to me. I played with him and I talked with him. John writed books, and him played on the cello. He played a violin too. He showed how to play our violin. He played "Guess the song' with us. We guessed "Twinkle Little Star." John made a magazine. A lot of people made a magazine. John was the boss. It was him's idea. He worked too. We carried things and stapled. We took packages to the post office with Steve and him gave us a kiss. We copied papers on the copier. I stapled my finger once. I put postage on packages and I weighed them. John typed on his typewriter. Sometimes he fell asleep on his typewriter. When he typed he put on his earphones and he didn't close the door. He talked on the telephone. Then he closed the door. We had a typewriter too and we typed. But our typing wasn't a magazine or a book. Sometimes it was a letter. Sometime I'm going to make a book. John said I could make a book.

I liked to be with him. He was our John Holt. He came to our house. He slept in Danette's room. Once Corrie stuck a penny to his head with spit. It stuck 'cause he was sort of bald. She was really little. He said she was learning. He didn't yell. Him never got mad at us. We watched the gymnastics on TV together. I told him I plan to be in the Olympics. He said he'd come and cheer for me. He was going to come and visit us. I was going to show him my cartwheel. We were going to play the violin together. I was going to show him my new room. But he died. He got cancer. Him was too sick. He took his body off. He went off to heaven.

I want John! John! John! John! John is my best friend. He has to take care of Anna. Anna got in an accident and got dead too. Her went with John. I don't like my friends dying. John was good at hugging. Nobody else likes to eat peanut butter and applesauce sandwiches with me. John liked to talk too and he never called me motor-mouth. John was a grown-up and a person. I miss John. He's still my best friend. You can love a person even if he has to take his body off and go off to heaven.

from Growing Without Schooling, 729 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116

LEARNING FROM MY MOTHER, LEARNING FROM MY DAUGHTERS

by Kate Kerman

Six years ago, I was at a Quaker retreat. Participants were asked to reflect and report on what their parents had given them as a spiritual base. I was stumped at first. My parents were, as far as I could tell, nominal Christians who went to Congregational churches for the social life and intellectual stimulation. What I had come to value as a Quaker, the mystical and personal relationship with God, hadn't been evident in my upbringing. As I pondered this, wondering a bit at the fact that I and my four siblings all seemed to be such spiritual seekers, I had a flash of insight. My mother, although never particularly expressing much interest or curiosity in spiritual matters, gave all of us a tremendous gift as she read out loud to us night after night, year after year. As she shared one book after another, she laid the foundation for my understanding of how the universe works. From Cinderella to Anne of Green Gables, from Winnie the Pooh to the Swiss Family Robinson, I grew up knowing there was hope in the world. These characters, and a myriad of other ones, taught me to believe that it is possible to shape one's environment, to better it. I came to expect a positive outcome despite adverse circumstances, based on the characters' attitudes and actions taken in response to those hard times. Love, hard work, strong relationships and magic - a connection with stronger and deeper forces than outward cause and effect - were all displayed over and over again in the stories I heard each night as I fell asleep.

I grew up in the 1950's. Not an auspicious time, many feel, for a woman to develop a strong self-image. Yet the stories my mother read were more often than not peopled by such wonderful female characters. Madeline ("to the tiger in the zoo, Madeline just said pooh pooh") who turned the adversity of an appendix operation into such an advantage for herself that "all the other little girls cried boo-hoo, we want to have our appendix out too." Cinderella, who had the guts to overcome a terribly dysfunctional family by choosing to take the risk of using magic. The old lady in the *Babar* books who did such a good job of raising the lost and homeless elephant that he became king of the elephants on his own merit. Alice, who held her own in two confusing worlds. Heidi, whose strong soul and common sense not only got her a good place to live, but bettered the lives of many people around her. Dorothy in the Oz books. Laura in the *Little House* books. Mrs. Wiggs of the cabbage patch. *Rebecca* *of Sunnybrook Farm*. The mother in *Swiss Family Robinson* (whose practical foresight and astonishing collection of implements removed from the sinking ship made life possible for all those men in her life). Mary in the secret garden. Jo in *Little Women* and its sequels. What an amazing collection of role models! No wonder I like feisty little girls and hell-raising crones, no wonder that I am able to be so persistent in creating an environment which works for me.

As I outgrew the nightly reading times, I read to myself - again, many books with strong women such as Nancy Drew, Jane Eyre, Mara, daughter of the Nile, Sakajawea, Jane Addams, Florence Nightingale, Nancy and Titty of the Swallows and Amazon books, Muggles and Curly Green in *The Gammage Cup*, Lucy and Susan in the *Narnia* books, Pippi Longstocking, Ramona, and Charlotte the spider. I fell in love with Ed partly because he was a college student who loved and read children's books. And eventually, I found myself reading every night to my own children, my daughters Ada and Hannah and my son Jesse.

Now, Ada took to reading at a very early age - around three. I encouraged her and she was intent on learning. I think I could have held her off for a year, and would now choose to do so since I think her eyesight suffered and that she has had to work to regain balance between her reading and more physically concrete activities. From Ada I have learned the value of following my own instinct in terms of allowing dependence until independence came naturally. We got a lot of complaints from other adults about how much we kept Ada with us - they worried when she was 18 months old that she was so dependent on us. I started being very grateful to myself that I had raised her that way when she blossomed into an amazingly independent and resourceful child. The point where I stopped worrying about it was when she was 5 or 6, and she came and showed me a game she had bought at a store one day while we were in town. There were several pieces missing. I said, "Oh, we should go return that." I turned around a minute later and discovered that she had gone off by herself to get a replacement - the kind of thing I still have a hard time doing.

Hannah, our second child, was mind-bogglingly different from her older sister Ada. We adopted her at the age of 11 weeks, and I spent essentially the next 8 years in struggle with her. She and I are both very stubborn people. By the time she was 18 months old, Ed and I were out at STEP parenting classes, trying to figure out how we could do this whole thing better. Ada had fit our style - let's talk it out and not get too emotional. Hannah was a whirlwind of emotions and contrariness. Ada learned to read when she was 3 and she simply absorbed all that schooly stuff - math, spelling, writing, how to tell time, ideas about history and other cultures. It all went into her brain and got categorized into easily retrievable files. Hannah learned to read when she was 11, and generally tended to ignore anything schooly. I wasn't accustomed to honoring the kind of learning she did best - watching people, sitting with animals and plants, listening, listening, listening to the world around her, standing as a toddler with her arms crossed on her chest and solemnly observing a friend of ours for twenty minutes until he became incredibly nervous, singing, singing, singing to her dolls and clamming up if I tried to listen in. She was the original for that statement you read in newspapers: "She sought her own treatment after the accident." Hannah did not want anyone else to direct her life, to tell her what to wear, how to get well, when to wash dishes or how and when to learn. The more I tried, the less it worked.

Finally, we started to learn how to honor her way. A very big influence on this was a week-long workshop that 8-year-old Hannah and Ed attended at Pendle Hill, a Quaker study center near Philadelphia. It was led by Twylah Nitsch, a Seneca elder. She took Ed aside after watching Hannah for several days, not participating in the group. She told him three very important things about Hannah, who is half Native American. "Hannah is a little Indian girl. And if you are walking with an Indian and tell him to speed up, it is in his character to slow down." Secondly, "She must wear the colors of clothing she chooses for herself. That is very important. " (Aha! Is this why Hannah has spent 7 years changing clothes several times a day?) and thirdly " You must honor her for her strengths. When she feels accepted for who she is, she will learn to read."

We homeschooled our children, and had nominally accepted the theory that children learn to read when they are ready. Accepting a theory like that is easy when your oldest child learns to read early. Dealing with the reality of Hannah's approach was a lot more of a challenge to me, coming as I do from a very academically oriented family. It took me two full years to come to grips with the truth of what Twylah had said. What finally tipped the balance was the fact that we moved and we had to go to our new school district and arrange a homeschooling program for Hannah, now 10 1/2 years old and reading at a bare "Cat in the Hat" level. I prayed a great deal before that meeting, and the help that came to me was a very firm understanding that I could not myself take credit for Ada's so-called academic advancement or blame for Hannah's so-called slowness. They were who they were and I was proud of both of them, and of myself for giving them what they needed and wanted. By then, I had done some reading and learning about Native American spirituality and I knew that Hannah's approach to the world came from that perspective. I couldn't teach her that approach myself, only respect it and help her pursue it as it arose. So I went into the meeting well-prepared, meeting the shock and concern over Hannah's reading with a lot of strength.

During the course of the next year she did learn the basics about reading, although I shall never know how, since she refused instruction as much as always. We continued to read out loud to her, and she rarely read to herself. My main consolation was the fact that she loved books and didn't seem to think badly of herself. At the age of 14, she started to read Scott O'Dell books. The first one took her two months to read. Two months later, she had read 4 or 5 of them. Within 6 months, she was reading full length adult fantasy novels, almost entirely feminist ones by such authors as Mercedes Lackey. She reads voraciously now at the age of 16, and is in the process of writing a long fantasy story which shows how much she has paid attention to the use of language and plot ideas. As a freshman at The Meeting School, she has done well in her classes because she knows what she is aiming for - a career working with animals, either as a vet or in some other way. Her spelling is still atrocious, and she is still working on arithmetic, but she feels great about herself and has become a major influence on the people around her because she is such a good listener and friend, such a thoughtful observer of the community.

Hannah's learning to read was a big process for her, and a life-changing process for me. I think she waited to learn until I accepted her fully, and I am grateful to her for her persistence. It would be nice, I think sometimes, to go back and start accepting her the day she came to us, but I am glad of the lessons we have learned from her in our own slow and painful manner. Without her tutelage, I don't believe I could be working effectively with other teenagers at The Meeting School. From her I have learned that it is essential to stay connected with that inner core of another person in order to give them the space to explore and learn what they can become.

Over the course of my life I have struggled with things I didn't like about my mother, my sisters, each of my daughters, and of course about myself. Standing as I now do between those generations, I find myself more and more able to enjoy these other women in my life for their own unique approach to life and learning and to honor my own approach - each way is valid, just as each author of all of those books my mother read to me writes well in his or her own special style.

Kate Kerman is admissions director, house parent and head of the Math Department at The Meeting School, a small Quaker alternative boarding school in Rindge, NH, and a member of the National Board of the NCACS. She also does and teaches healing therapeutic touch and has three children whom she has homeschooled. See also the article on The Meeting School by Judith Randall on page 60.

HOME SCHOOLING:
A Personal Experience
by Hannah Lapp

"Where did you get your education?" or "Which college do you attend?" are questions I find harder to answer than most people do. Education has meant much more to me than mere academic study.

My own formal education, and that of most of my 11 brothers and sisters, consisted of eight years of schooling at home. Our teacher was Mother, or our big sister Lydia. Going to school meant going to an upstairs hall or other suitable room in one of the sundry and fascinating dwellings we called home in those days. Our curriculum contained the basics for each grade in English, arithmetic, geography, and so on. Lydia selected our books from companies such as Scott, Foresman and Company, Laidlaw Brothers, and other publishers; some of the texts were as old as the McGuffey Readers.

As students, we were aware that education is serious business, and we worked our brains to the fullest. School was a thrilling opportunity. It opened the doors of knowledge and was a path into the mysteries of grown-up life.

Inborn in a healthy child is a thirst for the liberating powers of knowledge. Our teacher utilized these instincts of her students in introducing us not only to hard academic facts, but to an infinite learning process whose boundaries only our own self-discipline could shape. School learning meant learning how to expend mental energy to get information we wanted. Thus our minds were exercised not only in academic questions, but also in such difficult social concepts as freedom through meeting obligations, and the price of privileges.

"How can eight years be enough?" is a justifiable challenge offered against an educational background such as my own. Certainly the potential of young minds is much too valuable to justify halting education at age 14.

It does not occur to me to separate the education I received after the age of 14 from my eight years of formal schooling. For I regard the disciplined acquisition of knowledge too highly to draw its boundaries at the doors of an academic institution. I also respect it too much to assume that it is best taken care of by a government bureaucracy or any other monopolizing agency. For where, but within individual minds and circumstances, can it be determined what type of knowledge is the most needful and how it is best obtained?

The most suitable continued education for me and most of my siblings involved such things as skills training on our farm and self-help through reading, using libraries, taking short courses in specific subjects, and so on. Those of us who later decided to pursue specialized professions had no problem passing a high school equivalency test and taking off from there.

Even during my years of going to school at home, those hours of book-learning that qualified as a legal education were only a small part of my total education. More than we could fully comprehend at the time, we youngsters were receiving daily moral, emotional, and intellectual exercises that were just as important in preparing us for adult life as the mandatory hours spent in school. For just as becoming literate was essential to a self-sufficient and productive future, so also was learning responsibility and proper human coexistence. These concepts were instilled in us through necessity in our large, close family with many children to feed.

My family's search for a suitable private school, and finally the search for a region having laws compatible with home schooling, was a major factor in our many migrations when I was small. It was also a factor in our often tight finances. We children learned thriftiness from infancy, and enjoyed few niceties. But it was enough for us to be healthy and happy.

The same circumstances that appeared at times unfortunate endowed us with learning experiences which could well be envied by the less needy.

For example, my older brothers and sisters were compelled to search out employment from a young age in order to help support the family. During one school term, two of my sisters took turns babysitting for a neighbor lady who was consequently able to stay off public assistance by holding a job. In the absence of welfare, two low income families were drawn together to trade resources, thus benefiting all parties involved. My sisters were able to maintain their grades in school by taking their books to work, and their job in itself provided excellent hands-on education. Lydia, one of the two, would go on to instruct her younger siblings and, afterward, many other students during her teaching career.

Our quest for jobs where we could work together to support ourselves while being home schooled led us to a number of different states. Among other ventures, we traveled about in our family station wagon, following fruit harvests in their season. Where our employers permitted it, family members six years old and up helped to earn. It was through their children's ambitious participation that my parents were able to save up a considerable sum of money so that by 1972 they purchased the farmstead that would come to embody our long-time aspirations.

Dad picked Chautauqua County in western New York for the site of our farm because of reasonable land prices and job opportunities on the abundant fruit and vegetable operations lining the nearby shores of Lake Erie. He also questioned our real estate agent about New York's tolerance toward home schooling.

"Try it and see," was the agent's response.

My parents proceeded to do so.

School officials first confronted us five months after we arrived in Brocton, New York. At the time, we knew of no other families who attempted to home school in New York, and we had no idea what to expect. However, my parents determined to stand on their beliefs, come what may.

Lydia was teaching six of us younger ones at home when school officials came to question Mom. We heard them speak from where we were studying in an upstairs room, and teacher and students fell silent, trying to catch their words. "We have to see to it that these children attend school legally," a woman's voice was stating. Many scenes raced through our minds, including those frequent wearying travels we'd undertaken in our determination to home school. And we pictured a drama of recent years when school officials chased Amish children through an Iowa cornfield, trying to forcibly enroll them in public school.

Challenging the State

Our right to home schooling was challenged even more severely after we moved to a farm in Cassadaga, which was to become our permanent home. The Cassadaga school administrator was greatly annoyed by the presence of this family from out-of-state attempting to defy his previously unchallenged authority. "Child neglect" was the charge he filed against my parents in family court.

The danger of forcible removal from our parents was the only thing we children could not acceptably face. So we banded together and arranged a secret hideout, unknown even to our parents, to which we would flee if the officials ever came for us. We never had to use it. Acquaintances and employers of ours were vocal in our defense, and the case was thrown out of court, thus demonstrating the power of concerned citizens in reining in oppressive government. Also somewhat influential in our case was a brand-new Supreme Court ruling in favor of Amish families who had objected to public schooling and education beyond the eighth grade for their children.

We cooperated with Cassadaga school officials as far as possible throughout our years of home schooling. Initially we underwent inspections, exams, and interviews. The Cassadaga school principal came to observe our school and concluded of the teacher, "She may not be certified, but she's certainly qualified."

Later on we simply maintained free and friendly communications with school officials. Local teachers offered us their out-of-date books. On several occasions Lydia was even asked by area parents to tutor their children whose public school education was proving insufficient.

After teaching at a mission school in Belize, Central America, for five years, Lydia returned home to teach her own daughter along with several nieces and nephews. Present regulations require her to submit quarterly progress reports on each student to the Cassadaga school. The paperwork aside, she still teaches as she sees best, and with her superior results, no one wants to interfere.

The success of schools such as Lydia's and other private schools is drawing more attention with every new statistic on the disappointing results of public education. I have heard various suggestions advanced by citizens concerned with bringing American education back to par: teach teachers better, return to the three R's, require more hours in school, and so forth. The difference between private and public education, however, involves issues more fundamental than these arguments. It involves the entire teacher-student relationship. Private, competing schools are bound to the individual choices of those whom they serve. Schools bound to mandatory regimens rather than client interests are inherently incapable of providing what I call true education—i.e., knowledge garnered through the inner instincts to inform yourself to your own benefit. There's a difference between this type of knowledge and the kind that is methodically dumped upon you by the state.

Since knowledge that benefits one person may not benefit another, true education is infinitely diverse, varying from methods as ancient and basic as apprenticeship, to the most sophisticated academic instruction.

We as a family are now far from alone as home schoolers in our county and state. Lydia meets and exchanges ideas with a number of other parents who teach their own children. She also subscribes to *The Teaching Home* magazine, where one can gather or share helpful information as well as insights into national home schooling developments. *The Teaching Home* (P.O. Box 20219, Portland, Oregon 97220-0219) informs us that there are 4,000 children on record as being home schooled in New York State. We know that there are more who are not on the record, perhaps fortunate enough never to be discovered by the educational bureaucracy. All told, there are an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 children being taught at home in the United States (The New York Times, November 22, 1990).

The Advantages of Home Schooling

It is from my own experience that I call these children fortunate. If their education bears any resemblance to my own, it will possess several advantages.

First, it will contain a much richer infusion of parental interests, which are more sensitive to a child's individuality and total needs than are bureaucratic state interests.

Another rather marked contrast between public schooling and home schooling involves children's peer relationships. The home-educated child is spending more time with adults and siblings and therefore devotes more mental energy to relationships spanning age and generation gaps. Some parents may not see this as desirable. Others find it offers a healthy alternative to the intense peer pressure in most public schools. Excessive peer pressure can and does inhibit a human being's ability to think keenly.

In my own growing-up experience, I spent fewer than average hours with children outside the family, and zero hours watching television. Certainly this restricted my range of interactions with others. It did not, however, restrict my intellectual exercises in the least. I turned to my own unbounded imagination. I turned to exploring everything in sight, including books. Adult books were interesting enough to read cover to cover before I was 10 years old. For some reason, I never experienced, nor could I mentally conceive, the boredom with life displayed by many other youngsters.

Learning is exploration and discovery, whether you are observing the development of an ear of corn, working alongside Mom in the kitchen, going to school at home—or even attending a prestigious university.

Hannah Lapp is a dairy farmer and writer in Cassadaga, New York. Her moving account of her own homeschooling is reprinted from* The Freeman *for April, 1991. I wish I could remember who sent it to me!

THE EXPERIENCE OF SUMMERHILL
by Albert Lamb

Summerhill School, the grandparent of all free schools, celebrates its 70th birthday in 1991.

Summerhill is a community of about a hundred people, mostly children between the ages of 5 and 17, with both boarding and day pupils. The rest of the members of our school in rural Suffolk are adults—teachers and other staff. Over the years kids have come to the school from every corner of the globe.

Our founder, A.S. Neill, was 37 years old when he started Summerhill and he was already established as a Progressive educational theorist through his popular books on education.

Neill had grown up in a Scottish village as the son of the local schoolteacher. Unlike his seven brothers and sisters he was not deemed worthy of being sent on to the local secondary school so he was put out to work. Several years later he drifted into schoolteaching and at the age of twenty-five took up his formal education again as a student at Edinburgh University. He began writing about education and as a young graduate, working as an acting head of a Scottish village school, he wrote the first of his twenty books, *A Dominie's Log*.

Even at this early stage in his career Neill was advocating freedom for children. During the 1st World War he visited Homer Lane's school, the Little Common-wealth, where self-government was the primary tool in helping cure "problem children". Many aspects of the structure of Summerhill were modelled on the Little Commonwealth.

From its very beginnings in 1921 Summerhill was an international school. Neill was unusual among educational pioneers in caring more about "psychology" than about "education". During the early years Neill took many maladjusted children but in the 1930's he shifted the emphasis of the school and tried to take mostly normal children.

Neill came to see Summerhill as a therapeutic school for these normal children. His aim was to use childhood and adolescence to create emotional wholeness and personal strength. Neill thought that once this wholeness had been achieved children would be self-motivated to learn what they needed academically.

The key to this growth was to give children freedom to play for as long as they felt the need in an atmosphere of approval and love. The children were given freedom but not license. They could do as they pleased as long as it didn't bother anyone else.

Summerhill has always been a school where children are free to go to lessons or stay away from them, for years if they like. At Summerhill all the important decisions of communal life are decided through a democratic structure of weekly meetings where everyone, child or adult, has one vote.

Obviously in any system set up like this there must be a different educational goal from traditional schools. Neill denied the validity of almost all the traditional aims of education. Freedom and self-government are primarily concerned with the creation in children of a self-regulating character. "Self-regulation" means to live as owner of your own body and soul, without dependence on authoritarian structures.

This is the starting point of what is meant by being "free" in a "free school". It does not mean that you are free to do anything you please or that your life entirely lacks formal structure. You are left free to make the important decisions affecting your own life. You are left free from adult moralising and adult ambitions: to develop your own point of view.

We at Summerhill believe that a young child is self-centred and should be allowed to be so. Emotional growth, to be assured, requires an atmosphere of personal freedom and slowly increasing social responsibility. Limits need to be set by the people who live nearby, working together with the child. This was the idea behind Neill's phrase, "children should have freedom, not license".

The social control at the school has always been invested in the whole community through the Meeting and that control has always been greater than the word "freedom" would imply. Children like rules and they provide themselves with a great many of them. At any time during the history of the school there have been hundreds of "laws" on the books. Thus the emotional wholeness children gain at Summerhill comes from both their personal independence and the growing sense of their interdependence with others in the community.

At Summerhill the weekly school meetings are the self-regulating mechanism of the community. They are at the heart of the life of the school. Every week Summerhill kids and staff settle down after supper on Saturday night to make and change the laws that administer every facet of their life together. This General Meeting is concerned with announcements to the community, questions about areas of general concern and the proposal of new laws.

Each week the community picks a new Chairperson (at Summerhill called Chairman or Madam Chairman) to run the Meetings for the next week. The Secretary, who keeps the record of businesses, proposals and new laws, often holds the position for weeks at a time.

On Friday afternoon at two o'clock we have Tribunal. Tribunal is our form of law court for personal cases where people in the community can "bring other people up" if they feel they have been wronged in any way. After individual complaints have been heard the community can decide on appropriate fines. In all the meetings at Summerhill votes are decided democratically, by majority rule.

Saturday night's General Meeting starts with a Tribunal report and people have an opportunity to appeal a fine that they think is unjust. The Chairman then calls on those who have put themselves on the agenda with businesses. Each business is handled separately and the Chairman himself cannot speak on a business without having someone take his place.

Say, for instance, that Lucille is this week's chairman. She will have no vote of her own but she has a great deal of power over the meeting. If people disrupt the Meeting she can fine them or make them leave. She can choose who will speak from the raised hands being offered, take the proposals, bring them to a vote, and close each business. If she wants to wind up a discussion she can say, "Are there any proposals?" or, "Proposals only!".

As well as the regular Tribunal and General Meeting it is possible to call Special Meetings. You have to go to the Secretary and the current Chairman and convince them of the need for immediate community action. Special Meetings are run in the same way as a Tribunal case except that the school is free to speak more generally and make new laws.

The meetings at Summerhill combine formality and flexibility in a way children instinctively understand and believe in. Surprisingly, children will sometimes bring up their best friends with no feeling that they are endangering a close relationship. Each new generation of Summerhill kids quickly learn all the subtleties of their self-government.

The General Meeting and Tribunal take up a small part of each week but their presence is constantly felt throughout the school. The number of cases that actually come to the Meeting is small compared to the times in the week that someone talks about changing a law or "bringing someone up".

In its self-government Summerhill is applying to children what is already a philosophical truism for adults, the idea that government by the people is a good thing. It has some of the same advantages for children as for adults. When the important over-arching authority in a community is a simple majority of its members, individuals will accept and believe in this form of authority and not expend a lot of energy in rebellion. And through political action a minority at Summerhill can, over time, turn itself into a majority on any particular issue.

As well as the Meeting the school administers itself through the use of committees elected by a general vote and by Ombudsmen. At the beginning of each term there are often several committees that have to be formed or that need new members. As well as the regular ongoing committees like the Bedtimes Committee, the Library Committee or the Social Committee, the Ombudsmen are voted for in this way.

Each week three Ombudsmen are on duty to help people who need someone on the outside when they are in some kind of row. Sometimes Ombudsmen act as a witness or a representative while bringing the case to the Meeting but more often they settle the disagreement there and then. Even the staff make frequent use of the Ombudsmen as they don't want to be seen as authority figures handing down the law.

Certain issues of safety and of the practical organisation of the school are not left to the children to decide. For example domestic arrangements and health issues are not under the children's control. These limits to the democracy of the school are intentional. As much as is possible the kids have the power over their own life that they desire, and are not burdened with concerns that are beyond them. This is a subtle way in which Summerhill lets kids be kids.

An important part of the power children have over their life at Summerhill is that there are no compulsory lessons. If you don't want to study a particular subject or any subject at all that is your business. Classes are there for you to go to if you wish. There is a long tradition that if you sign up to go to a class and then don't attend regularly the other kids can throw you out for slowing them down. On the other hand if you want to play for weeks and years at a time that is your business. Nobody says a word.

The implication here is that what may be gained by having freedom of choice in a child's life is greater than any good that may be obtained under compulsion. Even at a young age intellectual curiosity requires freedom. At Summerhill children who have become self-motivated learn academic skills at lightning speed. Also, the growing child may know better than his adult guides what his needs are. There may be something bet-

A TEACHER SHOULD KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THE SUBJECT HE PROFESSES TO TEACH

"In my London school I succeeded a line of excellent teachers of drawing. I had not been long in the school when Di, aged 15, looked over my shoulder one day and said 'Rotten! You can't draw for nuts!'
A week later Malcolm looked at a water colour of mine. 'You've got a horrible sense of colour,' he said brightly. Then I began to wonder why everyone in school was much more deep on drawing and painting than they had ever been in the days of the skilled teachers. The conclusion I came to was that my bad drawing encouraged the children. I remembered the beautiful copybook headlines of my boyhood, and I recalled the hopelessness of ever reaching the standard set by the lithographers. No child should ever have perfection put before him. The teachers should never try to teach, he should work alongside the children; he should be a co-worker, not a model."

The above is quoted from Neill's writings. *A Dominie's Log* – 1916

ter to do for children than study... some more important use of childhood than the traditional scholarly activities. We believe that childhood is ultimately the time needed for growing up.

This is the essence of the philosophy of Summerhill. Freedom means freedom to play and mess about and live in your emotions. It means freedom to swear and shout and refuse to take a bath. It also means freedom to explore interests in your OWN way and in your own time. As well as "freedom to", freedom means "freedom from"—from fear and coercion and intellectual force-feeding.

Many things that at other schools are taught as part of the curriculum are at Summerhill dealt with within the course of daily life. Children at Summerhill develop a strong moral code, but it is not imposed; it arises naturally out of their freedom and democracy. Children do not need to be taught about racial tolerance when they are in a sort of extended family that is an

interracial group. The same could be said for feminist issues concerning respect for women's rights.

The school is effectively run by the oldest children. They form a group of elders that are very influential in the management of the school. When there is a body of older girls at the school, because they are so quick to mature, they usually have a leading role in running the school and another lesson is learned without a teacher. Thus the structure provided by Summerhill includes both the democratic forms of self government and a hierarchical structure of social expectation by age.

The youngest children at the school are called San kids and live together in the San. Their houseparent looks after their welfare and has a room with many home-like comforts that is kept open for them. These six to nine year old children eagerly attend lessons with their Class One teacher and the school makes a great effort to teach them reading and writing at this age.

The House kids, who are usually between ten and twelve years of age, live along the upstairs corridor of the House. Their houseparent provides a cosy room for them to repair to but their own rooms are a bit bleak and austere. This is by design and even if the school had the money it would not be spent on carpets for the floor or pictures on the wall for this age of child. Neill referred to children of this age as being in the "gangster stage".

As a group they spend very little time at their lessons in Class Two and are not very socially responsible within the community. This is not to say that their time is wasted. The social play and self-discovery that this age experiences is, from our point of view, one of the great benefits of a Summerhill education. A great deal of important development is going on under the surface.

After months or years away from lessons children are often able to re-enter the classroom on a comparable level with children from other schools. The staff at Summerhill have recently initiated a policy of tracking the kids who have not yet learned how to read. We now offer individual instruction in reading and writing to children who were not part of Class One or who came late to the school without reading skills.

The Shack girls live on the upstairs corridor under the care of the House houseparent and the Shack boys live with their own houseparent in the building known as the Shack. At this age kids begin to feel the pressure of the community to take a more positive part in the social life of the school. Shack kids sign up for classes in subjects of their choice and often start their preparatory work for their G.C.S.E.s.

The Carriage kids are at the top of the school. They are the true elders of the community. The boys' Shack housefather also takes care of the older boys. The girls' Carriages are housed in a separate building with the Class One teacher acting as their houseparent. Carriage kids get to have private rooms, later bedtimes and many other privileges of age and station.

At this age kids are expected to be self motivated and responsible and give back to the community some of what they have received. There is a lot of subtle community pressure to be on committees, be active in Meetings, work as Ombudsmen and generally take charge of the running of the schools life. At the same time this age group often works very hard to prepare for their exams.

It might be worthwhile to say something about the staff at Summerhill. The teachers and houseparents meet at tea and dinner in the staff room and use this forum to keep a corporate eye on the health and welfare of the school. Teachers are expected to take an active part in the life of the community and the staff as a whole work very hard to be caring and professional.

When the Carriage kids are mature enough to run the daily life of the school the staff try to take a back seat and let them get on with it. When the school is very young staff members have to be more socially active. Perhaps because the staff are not seen as figures of power, they are trusted more than at other schools and often confided in. This special relationship can give them a unique insight into individual children.

Summerhill is perhaps the only educational establishment in the world where "free-range" children have been allowed to develop and pass on their culture over the last 70 years in the context of a loving and democratic community. It is a culture where children perceive the adult as a friend and not an enemy. For many children it is a first chance to live a life without fear, stress and adult pressure. It presents the world with a proven working alternative to keeping children resentfully sitting at desks.

Visitors to Summerhill will confirm the sincerity, honesty, and friendliness of Summerhill pupils. Her Majesty's Inspectors at a recent inspection (in 1990) were impressed by their well-adjusted personalities, their effectiveness as decision makers, the ease with which they related to adults, and their high degree of self-confidence and personal development.

Most people re-cycle to their children what they experienced in their own upbringing. Too often this means discipline which allows for neither fundamental question or discussion. If parents don't like to do the deed themselves nowadays they can leave it to the schools. Discipline backed by physical insecurity and fear becomes translated in the next generation into intolerance combined with violence.

The "core" of the Summerhill "curriculum": its egalitarian and self-governing structure through the medium of the meeting; its firm faith in the ability of children to learn in their own way at their own pace; its belief in the value of childhood in and for itself - these ideas have never been systematically attempted in the mainstream.

Summerhill is a living model of a better way to relate to children. The consequences of terrible errors in childrearing are increasingly seen in violence, child abuse and casual crime. These consequences are coming home to roost in schools themselves. Summer-hill's continuing existence proves that at least one institution concerned with the welfare of children is prepared to defend childhood itself in the face of monolithic institutions of social control.

Summerhill has already had some influence on educational thinking. Neill became a well known figure during the 1930's in Britain and was much in demand as a speaker. During that reactionary and now seemingly stone-age period in education he had a pro-found effect on British teachers as well as on parents. Since that time Summerhill has been best known abroad and has had its greatest effect on schools and parents in other parts of the world.

In the 1960's Neill's book *Summerhill* sold over two million copies in the United States. In the 1970's in Germany the book sold well over a million in paperback. Recently, in the 1980's, there has been a great vogue for books about Summerhill in Japan. A collection of Neill's writings about the school called *The New Summerhill* has been accepted by Penguin and is now being read by publishers abroad.

Free schools have been started in the United States, Germany, Japan and other countries but have too often suffered from being outside the mainstream. The money and the power goes to institutions that will consolidate existing power structures, not to institutions whose only concern is to empower children.

The effect of Summerhill on modern education has always been way out of proportion to the numbers of students it has graduated. In the whole history of Summerhill only about six hundred students have been through the school. Perhaps the most noticeable effect of Neill's work has been on parents and their attitude to their children.

As an example of the latter let me quote Neill on the subject of teenage sex: "Every older pupil at Summerhill knows from my conversation and my books that I approve of a full sex life for all who wish one. I have often been asked in my lectures if I provide contraceptives at Summerhill, and if not, why not? This is an old and a vexed question that touches deep emotions in all of us. That I do not provide contraceptives is a matter of bad conscience with me, for to compromise in any way is to me difficult and alarming. On the other hand, to provide contraceptives to children either over or under the age of consent would be a sure way of closing down my school. One cannot advance in practice too much ahead of the law."

Neill has helped several generations of parents to feel more comfortable with their own children's sexuality. He would be pleased to see how many parents today talk openly with their teenage children about questions of contraception. Still, after all these years the school itself is in the same position it has always been in with regards to the law of the land. In fact, Her Majesty's Inspectors recently informed us that our youngest children will no longer be allowed to sleep in bedrooms with the opposite sex, an arrangement that has previously been our legal right.

Summerhill is the oldest self governing community of children in the world and while many things have stayed the same over the years many things have changed. Part of the great strength of the school is that it has grown in self understanding. The most important aspect of the school has always been its attempt to provide a structure so that the school will fit the child.

While Summerhill provides a traditional academic education and is proud of the academic achievements of its graduates the real benefits of its educational program are more profound. Many children come to Summerhill with emotional problems and go away whole and strong. At the moment a third of the children in the school are Japanese, many are from other countries, but all of them are Summerhillians. Warmth, optimism, independence and self reliance are contagious qualities at Summerhill. The structure of the school lets kids be both independent and accept their responsibilities to each other in a way that is like the best of human families.

Many of the benefits of a Summerhill education are not apparent until later in life. This "invisible" aspect of the school is one of the hardest things to describe to visitors or new staff. Neill himself was a late bloomer and in some ways Summerhill is the ultimate environment for late bloomers. With a happy childhood tucked under your belt your future development is almost assured.

After Neill's death in 1973 his wife Ena, who had been sharing the burdens with him for many years, took over and ran the school for twelve years on her own. In 1985 Neill's daughter Zoé Readhead (pronounced "Redhead"), who had grown up as a pupil in the school, became our current Headmistress.

Summerhill's living reality seems so powerful and right that it is surprising how little interest the world has shown in what actually goes on there. After seventy years there has still never been a systematic study of Summerhill's mode of operation, its effect on pupils, and its potential consequences for educational theory and practice in the larger context of the wide world.

An example of the latter... young kids at Summerhill almost always go to lessons eagerly. Older kids also seem very interested in their studies, often working much more cheerfully than adolescents in other schools. However, kids between ten and twelve at Summerhill spend very little time in lessons. At this particular age they seem to have a great need to get out from under the weight of adult expectations. Understanding why these children make this choice might help educators design schools that would work with child nature instead of fighting against it.

The world could learn a lot from Summerhill. There are lessons to be learned here about the meaning and proper uses of childhood, and the nature of growth. It is true that Summerhill is only a tiny boarding school and does not provide the whole blueprint for the state run day-schools of the future. Still, we believe that in this worrying time of rapid technological change and rapid social fragmentation and upheaval, Summerhill has a formula that could help us produce the men and women we will be needing in the future.

Albert Lamb, an American Summerhill graduate who lives in England, has shared his love of his school with his own children, and remains actively involved with Summerhill. He is also familiar to the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools, especially through his daughter Rosie, who has served on the National Board of the Coalition.

Many thanks to Albert for allowing me to use his splendid article on Summerhill.

THE ECOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD - A VIEW FROM SUMMERHILL SCHOOL

by Matthew Appleton

Over the past decade or so mechanized Western culture has begun to realize that it must work with nature, rather than against it, if humanity is to survive as a species. The stirring of a new consciousness is beginning to make itself felt, in small, somewhat stumbling ways, as we find ourselves facing a colossal crisis that we can no longer turn back from but must begin to grope our way through as best we can. It is becoming more and more apparent that there is an inherent wisdom in nature which we have ignored for too long. Our ignorance has pushed us closer and closer to the brink of catastrophe.

My concern here though is not with the environment or the atmosphere, which merely reflect the state of our own sickness. Our greatest stumbling block lies in our war with nature within ourselves. In particular I am concerned with our war with nature within the child, for it is in children that nature comes into our culture most immediately, spontaneously and alive. It is in our dealings with children that we wage this war with nature most arduously, and yet, most sublimely. In this arena we are probably more ignorant of nature's wisdom than in any other, and, in all good faith, we know not what we do.

To look into a new born baby's eyes is like looking into the depths of the cosmos. All the wisdom of the great sages seems to gravitate there, unspoken, unchallenged, alive. Watch the rise and fall of the abdomen and chest, it rolls and ripples in a graceful, wavelike motion, unified and unlaboured. Look at children in play, rooted in the newness and the nowness of the moment, lucid eyes and loose limbs, glowing with life and vitality. Look at what we make of them. Watch that glow begin to fade. See the sullenness and furtiveness that springs up in the eyes, the rigidity around the limbs that replaces natural, graceful movement with more angular expressions. See the breathing falter, become unsure of itself, grow shallow. Observe the absorption of the moment disintegrate into self consciousness, awkwardness and nervous listlessness.

What are we doing? What has been done to us? Is this nature at work, or are we working against nature? If we are to begin to answer these questions we must move education beyond the contours of its present course, at one moment moving towards liberalism, the next towards authoritarianism, and floundering on both banks. We must consider, instead, a new course of question-

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ing, concerned not with how we can best lead the child to conform to the equations of our culture, but, rather, with the ecology of childhood: how can we best nurture it and allow it to take its natural course? At this point of departure we must give nature's wisdom the greatest scope possible, and in doing so admit our own ignorance. We must focus, not so intently on what we can teach children, but also on what we can learn from them.

One experiment which encompassed such an approach was Summerhill School, founded way back in 1921, by A.S. Neill, as a reaction to his own upbringing and his experiences as a young teacher in Scotland. Instead of being crammed into classrooms and having endless facts thrust at them, under the shadow of the strap and the stick, he wanted to create an environment where children could grow up free of fear, and enjoy their childhood in in its own right. He saw childhood as more than an enslaved precondition to adult life. It was clear to him that children were emotionally crippled by enforced morality which created conflicts in them. By removing the taboos which caused them he sought to remove the conflicts. At Summerhill you were free to do what you liked as long as it did not interfere with anyone else. You did not have to go to lessons if you did not want to. That was no one's business but your own. The school was there to suit the child, rather than the child having to suit the school.

The school was also self-governing. There were weekly meetings whereby the laws were made by everyone, not just the staff. Everyone had one vote, from the youngest child to Neill himself. All had an equal voice. Rather than trying to guide the meeting with his own ideas, Neill would often sit back and see what the children came up with, or make silly proposals to see how the children would respond. Even his serious proposals were sometimes voted out. That was all part of self-government. People who broke laws or interfered with other people's freedom could be 'brought up' at the meeting, and on the one person one vote system, could be fined. These were usually small money fines, or a social fine, such as picking up litter. Neill noted that the children usually veered towards leniency, perhaps because there was no clear division between the miscreants and their judges; they were in a constant state of interchangeability. Neither were staff exempt from being brought up and fined at the meeting.

Given that the children had so much freedom and were able to guide the school in the manner they found most suitable, it was possible to observe much about the nature of children that is usually hidden or lost in an environment governed by adults.

The Summerhill experience seemed to belie the generally accepted view that, without discipline and morality, children would become lazy and insolent, even reverting to an inherent, primeval savagery, such as William Golding portrayed in his novel *Lord of the Flies*. Indeed, what Neill observed was that at Summerhill so-called lazy children became actively involved in community life. 'Insolent' children became tolerant and respectful of other people, and instead of reverting to savagery, children reverted to what Neill believed to be an inherent 'goodness'.

Although Neill died in 1973, Summerhill continues along the same lines that he established seventy years ago. It puts its faith in the 'goodness' of the child, though I prefer to use the word 'integrity' instead of 'goodness'. By integrity I mean the integrated wholeness of the child, which, when allowed to take its own course, can regulate itself as is most fitting to its own needs, and function as a social being, responsive to the needs of others, and open to life and love. There is still much that can be learned from observing children in a Summerhill environment. As an ex-Summerhillian, now Summerhill parent, said at a recent conference, 'You don't learn about the nature of chickens by studying battery hens'. So, in conventional schooling, the ways in which we damage the integrity of the child are not always obvious, whilst at Summerhill the hurt soon begins to surface as part of the healing process. This may manifest itself in many ways.

Left to their own devices children will follow their excitation wherever it takes them. They will express their excitation in sound and movement. The compulsory classroom, however liberal it may be, does not allow this natural excitation to flow as it should. To still their excitation, which is the well-spring of their well-being, children must stiffen and contract against it. They must tighten muscle, and breath shallowly to quieten the thrill of life that pulses and streams throughout their bodies. In this way, children learn, literally, to cut off from nature in themselves, and live a facade instead. How, and to what degree, this manifests itself, is dependent on many factors. But manifest it does, when and wherever natural processes are sacrificed on the altar of culture.

When children arrive at Summerhill, for the first few weeks, they tend to maintain the superficial facade of the 'nice', quiet, 'good' boy or girl, which is the approved model of our society. When the realization breaks through that approval does not depend on maintaining the facade, then the natural excitation and integrity of the child begins to reinstate itself. At first this may take many bizarre forms, again depending on the form in and degree to which the child's integrity has been insulted. All the pent up excitation rushes to the surface, and with it all the emotions that accompanied and were held in check by the original blocking. The child may begin to express anger (especially against adults), or sorrow, or make various statements of independence, such as not washing. Some children become abusive, antisocial or obsessive in some way, for example, breaking into things and compulsive stealing. This period, in which all the pent up excitation and emotion begins to come out is the period in which Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' might justifiably be set. But the story does not end here.......

No one at Summerhill tries to moralize or philosophize to the children, nor to politicize or spiritualize them. All problems are dealt with practically in the meetings. What we find is that in time, as the suppressed excitation is expressed, and the child's integrity is restored, s/he is able to regulate his or her life in a more harmonious and responsible way. Usually, this is with a maturity that children who have not been allowed to 'break out' rarely demonstrate. The child's faith in his or her own natural core is reinstated, and s/he is able to act with a deeper self-understanding, giving a voice once more to the inherent wisdom with which nature conducts itself.

I am not proposing that conventional schooling is necessarily the source of the child's difficulties, but that it tends to compound them. More often than not the problems are rooted in the family. The attitudes, and inability of the parents to live their own lives fully, along with a myriad of cultural considerations, wound the child's integrity. The most distinctive aspect of schooling at Summerhill is that it is based on choice. The school also has a wider function, though, as a sort of extended family, an international community of children. At present we have children from France, Spain, Germany, Morocco, Indonesia, Japan, England and America. Children come from many backgrounds, some well off, some not so well off. Some come with their parents' blessings, and their integrity has been respected and nurtured throughout. Some have been SENT to the school as a last resort: their parents do not know what else to do with them. The integrity of these children is no longer intact and their confused attempts to reinstate it is problematic at home or at school.

The degree to which the family is able to embrace the integrity of its children reveals itself in the ease with which the child is able to adjust to freedom. Conversely parents often state they have learnt much about themselves by their children being at Summerhill. As the child's integrity grows more complete so does the family's. Where the family is not able to meet the emerging of the child's integrity a conflict situation arises. I think now of a teenage girl who has been with us for over three years now. Every time she tries to establish her integrity the parents pull the carpet out from beneath her feet. They tell her she is stupid. They belittle the school, the only place she has known any happiness, and threaten to withdraw her when she asserts herself at home during the holidays. In such a case the child is caught in a great gulf between tho school, where she is always on the verge of up, and the home, where she is having to clamp shut again.

Usually though, there is a powerful healing period that takes place between the ages of seven , when we first accept children, and thirteen. Experience has taught us not to take on new children over the age of twelve. The release of pent up excitation , combined with the powerful biological drives of puberty, is a recipe for disaster. By the time children have reached adolescence at Summerhill they have already lived out their 'delinquent' period, and begun to take on the responsibilities of running the community. It is the big kids who sort out the disputes amongst the smaller kids, put them to bed, organize social events, chair the meetings, and generally have the strongest voice in the community.

There is something to be gleaned from this. It tells us something about the ecology of childhood that could be of great significance in a society where adolescent discontent and delinquency is such a problem. Just as we have begun to realize the ramifications of the abuse of nature around us, so we can begin to tackle the problems of the abuse of nature within us. In all areas of life our injured nature is showing us the same signs. The booming industry in therapy is another facet of the same picture. People are beginning to voice their sense of loss, to articulate the emptiness they feel inside them, and rediscover the hurt child frozen within. Moreover, this new therapy industry is not so much aimed at the people society would deem as 'victims', but at those who by society's measure are successes: the up and coming, the well to do, the professional.

The question of health is a far reaching one. We have learnt enough to know that wherever nature's wisdom is ignored, then nature's discontent finds a voice. My definition of health here is not simply a lack of the symptoms of sickness, but the ability to fully establish one's own personal integrity.

When Neill founded Summerhill he stated he wanted a school that would 'follow the child'. Allowed to define his or her own needs the child often displays an instinctive intelligence that our cultural creeds do not recognize. A young boy came to the school suffering from chronic asthma. Back in Japan his mother did not acknowledge his problem and would leave him alone in the house without medication, so that he had a great deal of anxiety about returning home for the holidays. At Summerhill he continued to have very severe attacks, but was able to enjoy a fairly full life, playing and socializing with other children. He also came to develop very trusting relationships with the adults at the school. As I got to know him, and he became more relaxed with me, he would take my fingers in his mouth and suck on them. As he did this, he began to spontaneously kick his legs and move his arms like a baby, and make deep, gurgling sounds in his chest and throat. It became clear to me that he was living out an earlier phase in his life that he had missed out on, and in doing so was re-establishing his integrity, and with it his potential for health. His asthma has not disappeared, but since that time he has not suffered from the severe attacks he had before.

On another occasion a child seeing a young goat being fed with a baby bottle asked if he might have one himself. Within a week half the community had baby bottles, and visitors to the Saturday night meeting were surprised to see even big sixteen year old lads sucking away. Apart from the odd bout of leg pulling no one was really derisive about this temporary reversion to infantile desire, and a definite air of contentment permeated the community at this time. As the main purveyor of bottles, though, I had attracted a somewhat notorious reputation at the local chemist's.

Parental anxiety is a great source of injury to the integrity of the child. Children with over-protective parents inevitably spend their first few weeks at Summer-hill bumping into things, falling over and generally injuring themselves. They are uncoordinated, clumsy and have lost their trust in their own ability to function coherently. In time their integrity heals itself, and they are off in the woods, climbing trees and running around, as nimble and agile as nature intended. The children are not supervised in their activities as they are in most schools, and yet the accident rate is very low, despite the potential dangers that exist in such exhilarating adventures. A teacher, visiting the school recently, became so anxious that she nearly had to leave a room in which children of all shapes and sizes were milling around with hot mugs of tea in their hands. This is an everyday event at Summerhill, and as yet, no one has been scalded.

Equally, parental anxieties about learning poses problems for children, who if uninterfered with would learn much quicker.

Many children do not attend lessons with any regularity for years, and yet, when they are motivated from within, they learn quickly and efficiently. When children are allowed to follow their excitation things happen naturally and spontaneously. One of the greatest sources of anxiety of our times is the fear of what we do not know, and yet this is one of the foundation stones of our education. If you do not know it is because you are stupid, or lazy. If you do not know, you will not pass your exams. Motivated by the fear of not knowing children are continually being stuck in frames of reference that are quickly becoming outdated. At a time, when especially in the sciences, humanity is making vast leaps into the unknown, surely it is time that education began to function around the desire to learn, rather than the fear of not knowing. Again, child nature is not understood, and educationalists and parents are stuck in the belief that children need to be pushed to learn. This inevitably damages the child's natural desire to learn. Freedom to not attend classes implies a certain faith in the child's inherent will to learn, and with the confidence which arises from this faith, children at Summerhill tend to learn in a relatively short time what it takes conventionally raised children years to learn.

Summerhill has been accused of neglecting the academic, and concentrating on the emotional. This is true only in the sense that, as Neill stated, ' If you look after the emotions, the intellect will take care of itself.' What is important is not how much a child can learn in a given time, but that the child's desire to learn, when s/he is ready to, is not damaged. The emotionally whole child learns at a ferocious speed what is relevant to his or her own needs at the time. Even if the bulk of academic learning occurs after the conventional period allocated for education, it will always be achieved more fully if entered into wholeheartedly. The child who has been pushed into the academic labyrinth before s/he is ready, often spends more time and energy trying to thrash through dead ends than s/he does making the progress s/he would if nature was allowed to take its own course.

An eleven year old boy, whose parents were very anxious about his inability to read, came to me for private lessons. A series of bad experiences with teachers at previous schools had left his self-esteem very low, and he believed himself to be stupid. After a few lessons I realized he was insincere in his desire to read, but was more concerned with trying to please his anxious parents. I suggested to him, that instead of labouring the point, I would read him a book by an American Indian Medicine Man, which he had showed interest in before. Soon he was looking over my shoulder and picking out words that he would never have been able to decipher whilst the motivating factor was the pressure of HAVING to learn to read.

Another boy, of about the same age, whose parents were both ex-Summerhillians, and supported him for who he was, decided, completely of his own accord, that he wanted to learn Japanese. He asked one of his Japanese friends to teach him. Within a couple of months he was able to read, write, speak and understand large chunks of the Japanese language. It is my own belief that if children were allowed to follow their excitation unhindered by unnecessary adult interference they would each find the natural genius within them. Genius has its root in genuineness, and if children were allowed to do what they were genuinely interested in their genius would emerge. If doing and being were not so severely segregated, nature would be more fully able to express its inherent wisdom.

Given that we live in a consumer society, and that children at Summerhill are able to dictate their own laws by which to live, it is also interesting that expensive toys and television play a very small part in the children's lives. There are various self-imposed regulations about the viewing of television, and it would seem that most children prefer the real contact of living human beings to the pseudo intimacies of the T.V. tube. Television is watched, and enjoyed, as are computer games, but they do not take on the all pervasive distraction to real life that they do in so many homes.

Although Summerhill plays a therapeutic role for many children, its primary function is prophylactic. The principle of the school is to protect and nourish the integrity of the child before the damage is done, although in practice this is rarely the case. Experience has shown that even though children whose integrity has been severely undermined can benefit from the school, it may distract the community from meeting the needs of the other children, to whom freedom comes more readily. The school's commitment to children with 'problems' must always be relative to the make up of the community as a whole. Essentially though, Summerhill is Utopian in its approach. It demonstrates a natural wisdom, an inherent integrity in children, that goes way beyond the vision of contemporary society. It exposes our ignorance in such matters, and raises questions that many would prefer not to ask. Often it reminds us of the forgotten pains of our own childhoods, which we have learnt to sublimate into the social fabrications of our culture.

What Summerhill advocates it has consistently lived throughout its seventy years of existence. It is no mere theory.

Even in this, though, Summerhill has had to accept many compromises, which inevitably limit its scope in such a demonstration of child nature. If possible the school would only accept the children of parents who fully believe in, and support, the integrity of their children. As yet, though, such parents are rare. To meet the demands of the society we live in, the school provides supply exam courses for its pupils. The children are well aware that they must pass exams to make their way in the world. Mostly they do well in their exams, but this emphasis on education through fear of not knowing cannot but have some effect on their natural desire to learn.

As well as endowing children with a inherent wisdom nature has also endowed children with sexuality, which, in adolescence, is at its most intense. Unfortunately, the law of the land has decreed that this sexuality should not express it self in the fullness it deserves anthropological evidence suggests that ill cultures which have been affirmative towards childhood and adolescent sexuality, there is a distinct lack of promiscuity, sexual perversion, venereal disease, rape, or the subjugation of women and children. Our culture is riddled with all these things, along with a generally immature, unhealthy attitude towards our sexual feelings. Nature expresses itself sexually in its young. We are the only species to deny that sexuality, and the only species to suffer from sexual anxiety. Perhaps, again, we should start to respect nature, rather than work against it .

We live in a time when the educational world is moving more and more towards rigid, academic standards, metered out by consistent testing at ever younger ages. The ethic of the fear of not knowing is becoming more deeply entrenched than ever. It is ironic that at a time when the British education system is moving ever closer to the Japanese system, nearly half the pupils at Summerhill are Japanese. If it wanted to, the school could fill itself twice over with Japanese children, and is frequently visited by Japanese educationalists who are looking to Summerhill to solve some of the grave problems they are now beginning to admit exists in their schools. Socially, children in our culture have more the status of commodities than living, feeling beings in their own right. They must be 'presentable'. They must be 'sweet' and 'loveable', like E.T., or Bambi. Children's clothes become more expensive, as they become more geared towards adult aesthetics and less to the needs of the children. The demands to stay clean, and 'be good' are more palpable than ever. Even if this is not the everyday reality, it is the model by which success is measured.

children. The demands to stay clean, and 'be good' are more palpable than ever. Even if this is not the everyday reality, it is the model by which success is measured.

The way of life that Summerhill demonstrates cannot be simply reduced to yet another form of 'alternative education.' It an attitude towards children, and ultimately, an attitude towards life. Personally, I would no more desire to impose my values on a child than I would lock up a homosexual, deprive women of the vote, or subjugate another race because its beliefs or skin colour were different from mine. Better a child be totally absorbed in reading the Dandy or the Beano than forced to read a Shakespeare play s/he is not interested in. The Bash Street Kids have as much a place in the scheme of things as Hamlet. Let the child follow his or her own excitation and an interest in and love of life will always be there. When we consistently interrupt the flow of their excitation we fragment our children's integrity, we cut them off from the nature they are rooted in. When we begin to study the ecology of childhood we find a deep wellspring of wisdom that the over cultivation of conventional education largely ignores and obscures. Throughout the planet nature is protesting at our treatment of it, not only in the atmosphere and environment, but in our schools and homes too. When we have learnt to acknowledge the wisdom of nature in our children, our understanding of nature's wisdom in the world and in ourselves will deepen of its own accord. We have already made the small step of advocating free range chickens; when will we make the great step of advocating free range children?

Matthew Appleton is a houseparent at Summerhill School. His splendid article is reproduced here with his kind permission.

TWO ON FROEBELIAN EDUCATION:
ADDISON GARDENS, A LONDON INNER CITY SCHOOL

AN EXPERIENCE IN FROEBEL'S GARDEN:
by Elizabeth S. Cole

Now the garden-beds are blooming,
Water-pot in hand, we're coming,
All the thirsty plants to sprinkle,
All the buds begin to twinkle.
Scatter now their perfume rare,
They open their petals one by one,
They roll out their cups to the glowing sun,
Rewarding all our tender care.

From Mother-Play and Nursery Songs
by Friedrich Froebel (1878)

According to Froebelian philosophy, a "thirsty plant" is a metaphor for the natural curiosity of the young child. Friedrich Froebel (1887), the German educational reformer who founded the concept of kindergarten (literally translated as child's garden), believed that children should be aroused to activity by having their interest awakened, cultivated, unfolded and ripened. To emphasize this aspect, the garden was an important environmental component of Froebel's classroom design. In the garden, Froebel felt, children were brought under the influences and impressions of natural learning.

During a recent sabbatical, I had the good fortune of observing in a contemporary setting the tenets of learning expressed long ago by Froebel. Although my area of expertise is early childhood art education, I was immediately impressed with the application possibilities that Froebelian principles offered to the art educator. These ideas came to light while conducting research in an inner-London school.

Hidden among row houses in various stages of repair in London's crowded west end is a multilevel nursery and primary school built in the early 1900s. Addison Gardens is a neighborhood school serving a diverse ethnic population. Recent immigrants residing in makeshift hotels, subsidized families, unemployed and blue collar workers comprise the socioeconomic makeup of this community. The lack of vegetation and natural beauty surrounding the school reflects the bleak atmosphere the children face once they leave the confines of their classroom.

Behind the school complex, on the first floor of the building, the austere conditions of the outside world are quickly transposed as one enters the stimulating classroom of Jo Smith, the nursery school teacher. Jo, who is in her second year of teaching, received her training from the Froebel Institute College. Upon my arrival, she remarked, "I want the children to feel as if they are invited in to create." Directly outside her classroom is a playground that she has filled with manipulative materials for play. Tucked in a corner of the outdoor playspace is the link between Friedrich Froebel and Jo Smith. There a small garden plot, which contains the remnants of the children's sunflower crop, is a testimony to the long lasting effects Froebel has had on early education.

Froebel and the Evolution of the British Nursery School

After a failed Prussian revolution in 1848, German liberals immigrated to England. Among those who settled in the Bloomsbury area of London was a group of female teachers with extensive Froebel training. They immediately set up kindergartens that adhered strictly to the methods and ideals of Froebel's philosophy. The success of these kindergartens won the financial support of influential businessmen, and the imported kindergarten programs found fertile ground in the upper-middle classes of London. By 1884, the Froebel Educational Institute was founded to promote and train teachers in the educational ideas of Friedrich Froebel.

Childhood Education

In the late 1800s, the London School Board formed a committee to assess the feasibility of extending public education to children below the age of 5. The success of the German kindergartens, although private in nature, had convinced the government that early education could benefit all young children. The committee published an extensive report of findings (London School Board, 1908), which suggested that the term "nursery school" be adopted as the official label for education of 3- and 4-yearolds . Regarding teacher credentials, the report stated:

> Probably the best person to have the management of the Nursery School will be a well-educated teacher who has been trained on Froebelian principles in the widest sense of the word. Her preparation would, therefore, include a careful study of the physical and mental development of childhood; a thorough course of Nature

> Study, and some study of literature and history for children in poetry and story. (p. 20)

While the endorsement of the government committee verified the soundness of Froebelian doctrine, in actual implementation the precepts were modified. The extensive teacher training required, distinct conditions such as small classes and special materials were all financially impractical for a nationwide government-funded school system. As a result, some alterations were made but the basic premises of Froebel's ideas remained at the center of the nursery school operation. Of special consideration for this article was the committee's recommendation that children should "have easy access to playgrounds which should contain trees and small garden plots" (London School Board, 1908, p. 20). To this day the garden remains an integral part of British school environs.

The Children's Garden

With this background of Froebel's influence on British Nursery Schools, it is time to turn attention back to the classroom in Addison Gardens. On this particular day, the children were fascinated with a sunflower Jo had brought in from their garden. She explained to me that the children had planted the seeds at the close of their summer term in July. When they returned in September, their garden was filled with bright yellow flowers reaching far above their heads.

The process of planting and cultivating these magnificent flowers was not meant to be an isolated experience for the children. Learning, according to Froebel (1887), is not compartmentalized. Everything relates and connects. Bruce (1987) explains that in Froebel's notion of a learning sequence, there is not a smooth progression but slight changes in the familiar, since learning involves challenges to what is already known (p. 15). Allowing the child to assemble, connect and assimilate a concept requires the teacher to know when to interact and when to withdraw from the discovery process. Despite her limited teaching career, Jo intuitively knew how and when to intervene sensitively in the children's learning.

Initially, the planting of the sunflower seeds allowed the children to take ownership in the growth process of the plants. Goldammer (1882) noted that Froebel felt that children, by natural instinct, need to dig in the earth. After all, he states, the instinct of agriculture was one of the first civilizing tendencies to occur in the human race. The hands-on experience is, in Froebelian thought, a sensitizing method for the acquisition of knowledge. The child links concepts with real things. The wholeness of the garden experience brings the child directly under the influences of nature. Only that with which the child occupies himself, that which he himself holds and handles, can maintain a lasting hold on his attention (Froebel, 1887).

The first visual documentation of the sunflower's successful growth was made by the children shortly after they returned for the fall term. Jo encouraged the children to observe the shapes, textures and colors of the plant. They measured how tall the plant had grown. They counted the petals. They discussed how they might achieve mixing colors of paint to match the variation of hues within the flower, stem and leaves. They suggested ways to represent the parts of the flower with different painting tools. Beginning with the whole, Jo interacted with the children to help them form a network of information across different areas of knowledge. The accumulated effect of the experience was witnessed in the beautifully painted, nearly lifesize sunflowers displayed in the classroom.

On the day of my visit, Jo brought out one of the sunflowers that the children had previously painted. The sunflower, which was at the end of its blooming period, had suffered the ravages of nature during a week of rain and wind. The children were curious about the new form. They handled it, used a magnifying glass to look for subtleties and discussed the variety of changes that had taken place in their flower. Once again the children were encouraged to gather sensory information through self-discovery. Jo merely stepped into the group, offered them the visual stimulus, then moved to the background while the children examined and discussed their findings.

Harrison (1905), who was an advocate of Froebelian teaching, explains how critical sensory awareness is to the child's thought process:

> Half the wealth in the world is lost to most of us from lack of power to perceive. The difference between so-called clever children and intelligent ones is largely a difference in the sense perception. (p. 23)

Later on in the day, the sunflower was placed in the drawing center. A number of stimulating activity centers in the classroom allowed the children to select materials to explore and manipulate. Jo believes that the materials need to be presented in an inviting way. The drawing table contained a variety of papers and drawing implements. Bits and pieces of colored surfaces, pots of crayons, pastels and baskets of markers provided a rich selection of materials. The center was adjacent to the collage and paint area, and the children were comfortable moving between the centers to embellish their work. The idea of linking was not only evident in their thinking, it was also a part of their creative process.

Several children selected the drawing table as their focus of activity. Young Laura became fascinated with removing the dried seeds from the flower. Noticing her discovery, Jo pointed out to Laura the variation of colors in the seeds and how they neatly fit back into their own little pockets in the pod. With this inspiration, Laura set out on a drawing venture that continued throughout the afternoon. Her discovery became a sustaining force as she created her visual perception of the sunflower.

Laura began her drawing using pastels and markers. Remembering her previous rendering of the flower, she moved to the paint center and added a few touches of color. Jo then suggested to Laura that little bits of color could be added to the work at the collage table. Laura's obvious delight with the work intensified as she began assembling materials on top of her work. Encouraging the children to extend their efforts is something Jo does constantly in the classroom. "I like them to go beyond the obvious solution, to solve the problem in a different way," she said. In Laura's case, Jo had been very successful. Laura not only added bits of paper; she embellished her creation by layering netting, fringing the edge of the paper and collaging a small box to the surface in which she continued her flower representation. Each newly added surface became a challenge for Laura.

Finally Laura brought her sunflower activity to an end. "Do you like it, Jo?" she queried. "Yes I do, do you?" Jo responded. At that point, a group of children gathered around Jo and Laura to assess the work of art. They talked about the design, Laura's inventive use of materials, and how patterns and arrangements worked. By the well measured level of the children's response, it was obvious that Jo regularly engages in this critical process. Allowing the children to assess and comment on Laura's artistic endeavor added another dimension to Jo's efforts to sensitize the children to become aesthetically aware of the beauty around them, whether it be in the form of a sunflower or in a child's arrangement of shapes and colors.

Late in the school day, Froebel's philosophy of learning became a true-life event. John, who is above average in size, had become a behavioral problem in the classroom. Parental pressures have placed demands on his learning that are not within the realm of his capabilities. Consequently, he is frustrated with school and remains attentive for very short periods of time. This day, however, his curiosity had been piqued by examination of the sunflower. During the course of the day, he periodically handled the flower. Suddenly, in a burst of excitement, he came running over to Jo to announce his discovery. He realized the seeds in the pod were just like the ones they had planted in July. "If you plant these," he exclaimed, "we'd have new flowers!" The whole cycle of growth was now established by this young child after experiencing and fitting together the parts. The unity of the learning process was complete.

Application of Froebelian Principles to Art Education

The current focus in art education methodology has been on a substantive approach called discipline-based art education, advocated by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts (Duke, 1983). The basic premise of this method is that art should be approached as a subject of study with a sequential curriculum that integrates instruction in art history, studio art, aesthetics and art criticism (Greer, 1984). The merits of this strategy are many, but it is only one strategy for creating in depth instruction in the arts. Gardner, as cited by Bruce (1987), points out the dangers of holding to one overarching stance. Such rigidity, he comments, tends to narrow the approach to problems, rather than opening up the exploration of them (Bruce, 1987, p. 5).

Gardner's words ring true when recalling the excitement of learning generated by the children's planting, examination and artistic rendering of the sunflower. We, as art educators, need to be reminded that effective teaching methods are never outdated. Principles of the past can still be successfully employed as viable methods for creative teaching.

While Froebel was primarily concerned with early childhood education, his principles for maximizing learning can readily be applied to the field of art education. These points should be considered:

- Encourage learning connections between art experiences rather than offering isolated lessons. By doing so, knowledge that is absorbed through this interactive process can be transformed and stored in the imagination of the children.
- Provide self-directed, self-discovery activities. The media and objects the children encounter during these activities will help them explore new ways of using these materials.
- Intervene sensitively when appropriate, so that the child's art experience is not dominated by the teacher and the child is not left helpless in the art process.

- Provide a stimulating environment that offers children opportunities to extend their learning experiences.
- Offer children opportunities to express their feelings and opinions about forms of beauty. These "first feeling encounters" promote articulation of the children's visual perceptions, as well as aesthetic awareness of the world around them.

Finally, Froebel's principles are not an easy recipe for successful art instruction. Past traditions and present trends all offer ways to stimulate and motivate children in the creative process. The variety of teaching options we as art educators have should not, to paraphrase Froebel, be compartmentalized. As new teaching strategies surface, the art instructor needs to be alert to possibilities for linking strategies successfully with past curriculum trends. There is, after all, more than one way to plant and cultivate an idea!

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"LASST UNS UNSERN KINDERN LEBEN!"

(Come, let us allow our children to live!)

Froebelian principles of educational freedom in contemporary pedagogy

by John Froebel-Parker

"Lasst uns unsern Kindern leben," that oft-cited exhortation uttered 140 years ago by Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel must become a rallying cry for contemporary education. The German pedagogue and founder of kindergarten was a proponent of "natural development." He saw the child as a flower which must be cultivated in order that it might grow into its own individual and complete beauty - all under the nurturing gaze of the *"Kindergærtnerin,"* or kindergarten "teacher" whose job it was to aid and suggest, model and facilitate but never mandate or cajole. In this model all children were invited to participate, and, although among his supporters were Baroness von Marenthal-Buelow and the Queen of Saxony, he insisted that youngsters from *"Krethi und Plethi,"* from the workers to the nobility, had the right to develop side by side to their highest potential.

These ideas were thought too radical for the Prussian regime of the day and too easily related to Friedrich's nephew, Julius Froebel's "socialistic tendencies." Julius, ex-consul to Smyrna, had been sentenced in absentia to death after the revolutionary period of 1848 and fled to the United States, where he involved himself in German-American political movements. Thereupon was issued the infamous *"Kindergartenverbot,"* which put a crushing halt to Friedrich Froebel's dream of liberal, free, and child-centered early childhood education.

Luckily, many of the progressive intelligentsia left Prussia for England and the United States where his ideas were furthered, notably by Baroness von Marenthal-Buelow and his great-niece, Henriette Schrader-Breymann. One institute still alive today as a result of that philosophical migration is the Froebel Institute and Teachers Training Center in Roehampton Lane in London. Society then as today often actively seeks to eliminate the threat of true freedom of thought. Then Julius was sentenced to death, and Friedrich died of a "broken heart," which today would be called severe depression upon seeing his vision publicly extinguished. Today, system-oriented education results in children trained early in conformity though told that they are free - or young people who abandon institutionalized education which has never prized nor furthered their innate characters or talents. Though there are many laudable advances and programs in public school systems. I believe, as institutions they effectively squelch the "natural development" that Froebel so fervently defended.

Elizabeth Ferm, active in founding the Modern School based on the philosophies of Francisco Ferrer and Froebel, emphasized that point, as evidenced in this quote from her book *Freedom in Education*:

> A visit to any average kindergarten will convince an educator that Froebel's conception of education is not comprehended as yet. Instead of individuality we find the subjection of the individual; instead of self-activity we find work resulting from either suggestion or direction. Instead of finding the child applying himself to an object which attracts him, going back again and again as long as he finds self-interest in it, as a child in spontaneity will do, we find a custodian of children, skilled in ways and means to excite, and then, in turn, to quiet the child for some interest of her own... Instead of helping the child to gain true knowledge—knowledge of himself—he is constantly turned away from himself to objects and interests outside of himself. The child is urged to follow a path mapped out by the one in charge of the kindergarten, with no element of his selfhood in it, unless it can be called selfhood when he says, does, and moves as is instructed.

Elizabeth could have witnessed the same dynamics in elementary, secondary or university situations in which there is a manipulation of action, thinking and pseudo-creative production which annihilates the process of investigation and intellectual growth. How well I remember asking one of my professors why we were not reading any works of literature by medieval women writers—only to hear from him that there "were none...women did not write then." Luckily I did not take the system so very seriously, except to realize that this man would assign an "evaluative" grade to me at the end of the semester; otherwise I might have accepted that statement as "*wahre Muenzen*" or "true coins" and have accepted the notion that women had nothing to convey in writing in that period at all. In a free system the professor could have said, "That would be fascinating to find out." Instead, there was an imposition of a posture which could have and probably did impede the true acquisition of knowledge for many students in the class.

In language instruction until recently we witnessed the shortcomings of the direct translation method, the grammar method, and the audio-visual method. I learned Latin by the first and was astounded when friends from Great Britain one day amused themselves with whole conversations in that "dead" (that is what I had been told) tongue. Somewhere along the line their education mentors had fostered self-expression in "Latin as a Living Language," whereas I had been offered "Latin as a Dead Language." It is only as "dead" or "alive" as it is permitted to be. Our students are only as "dead" or "alive" as we permit them to be, although they will run away from the system by dropping out or tuning out as a way of escaping a sense of belittlement or subjugation.

English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers have a wonderful opportunity to foster and promote free and student-centered education which prizes each individual as unique and additive to the common experience. We want our students to maintain and foster their dignity, and do not demand "Americanization," "Canadianization," "Anglicization," or "Australianization" as the bridge to effective acquisition of English. There is realization in the profession that such monolithic paradigms are quite artificial in nature and pedantic in exercise. There is room for everyone in the garden of English-language learners, as there was in Froebel's kindergarten.

In my original talk I illustrated this point with anecdotes from my own professional experience. I urge you to think of your own successes and testimony to the sublime beauty of freedom in education. As ESL teachers we are student-centered, we promote increased "student talk-time," and we offer respect for the home culture, while making a home for it in the school setting. These approaches to education can save myriad boys and girls and adults who come into our educational trust. We must live with and alongside our children, not above them in Byzantine style. By giving them the recognition, respect, and friendship that we are capable of, we can infuse contemporary pedagogy with Froebelian principles, which are learner-centered, and help prepare people with healthier self concepts, courage to question and grow, and a sense of empowerment which must lead to stronger democracy and personal fulfillment.

This article is based on remarks given by John Froebel-Parker at the 1991 Capital District New York State Teachers of English as a Second Language conference in Albany, New York. The author is a great, great... (a good many 'greats') grandson of Friedrich Froebel, and runs an international art gallery in Albany and Madrid, Spain.

THREE ON THE MODERN SCHOOL MOVEMENT:

THE NEW JERSEY MODERN SCHOOL IN STELTON, NJ:
Gist Of Extemporaneous Remarks At The
Third Annual Reunion Of Fhe Friends
Of The Modern School Association
by Jo Ann Wheeler Burbank

It may be of interest to know how I came to the Modern School. I began to teach a one-room rural school when I was still only seventeen—with the connivance of a desperate District Superintendent badly in need of teachers. It was the typical "little red schoolhouse'—actually it was a dingy gray; it housed some 24 pupils ranging in age from four to thirteen years, and from pre-school to first year high school. We now call this set-up an open school, and this it was—outwardly.

Unfortunately, it was governed by a very strict Course of Study devised in Albany to cover all grades. For example, a child of ten years was supposed to be in the third grade and in that grade he was supposed to complete a detailed line of study. Otherwise he wouldn't "pass'... and questions were apt to be asked...from parent...from the authorities. In other words, the child was to be fitted into a mold, regardless of individual differences, rate of growth and aptitudes.

Fortunately, we were not too rigidly supervised, so for a while I was more or less able to gauge the school to the individual needs of the children. It was soon very necessary to learn each child's potential, to allow him the latitude he needed to forge ahead at his own pace, or to work out his difficulties...(and there were many in that truly rural community)...Coming from a family in which not only "book learning' but creative activity and self initiative were the rule, it was natural that sooner or later I would try to introduce creative activities, to try to stimulate a child to think for himself. For about four years I managed to keep such a regime going by walking a tight rope...trying to compromise between the authoritarian regime imposed by the state and the idea of growth from within outward, which my own background had taught me was the best way for children to grow. Then I gave up.

My parents were at that time living in Reading, Pa. and my mother, whose ideas on education were very advanced, became friendly with Kate Edelman who was also living there. When Kate heard of my experience, and of Mother's theories of child development, she exclaimed, "Why, you ought to know about the Ferms!" And this is how I first heard of Elisabeth and Alexis Ferm.

It isn't necessary here to detail how I finally arrived in Stelton, but in 1931, when my daughter, Shelley was four years old and son, Jon two and a half, we finally came to the Colony to stay for eleven years. Our coming coincided with what I usually refer to as "the second coming of the Ferms". In spite of their age, the Ferms were in spirit, younger than any of us; their ideas were as stimulating and invigorating as ever. It was for me a kind of homecoming, as well as a kind of vindication! To find ideas which had been vaguely struggling for expression, carried out by an unexcelled team of educators, to a degree I had not yet reached—filled me with an excitement, that to this day, I can still feel.

Psychologists, almost to a man, tell us that no individual ever fully realizes more than about one-tenth of his potential. While it may be true that mankind may not be able to achieve perfection, it certainly *is* true that mankind can be a lot better than it has been so far. The Ferms' philosophy seemed to me then and seems to me now, to be basically the only one on which to found a system of education that can free the individual for self mastery; to allow him to develop whatever his gifts may be, not only for himself but for the good of all. What we seemed to learn at Stelton and in the School, was that what benefits one should also benefit all. We did not develop as competing rivals, but as cooperative friends. We learned to appreciate the good work of others without in any way feeling ashamed of our own. It never occurred to anyone, I believe, to feel that one's work was either inferior or superior to that of his friends. Whether or not this fits one to live in a competitive society has always been a moot question for some, but never seemed important to me.

Creative activity, I believe, is at the bottom of human growth—and I do not mean merely drawing pretty pictures or dancing in the morning assembly. I mean any activity which requires the use of the hands, the mind and the heart,—the "whole" person, and that may seem a bit metaphysical, but I can't think of a better way to express it. It means opening the gates of the urge to create which lies within all of us and letting it have full rein. In this way, one learns to grow, to develop through trial and error, a knowledge of one's capacities and limitations—one's special channels of creativity; to obtain the strength to cope with disappointment, triumph, happiness and vicissitude.

We have talked a great deal about freedom in education without ever really defining what freedom means. It has been said by Nellie Dick and Lilian Rifkind here, that we tried to show as much by our conduct as by precept, that only the person who is truly responsible for his own conduct can be really free. I believe that to be vital. One enslaved by emotions of greed, pride, the will to dominate, can never be truly free, for he cannot control himself. We never told a child to behave himself with an implied "or else I will *make* you behave". The quiet admonition was always "control yourself"...In other words, by saying "*You* control *yourself*", we threw the responsibility where it belonged, on the individual, himself. It really worked.

We also disavowed punishment for as the Ferms believed, and I came to believe with them, each action carries its own reaction. To the child it meant "getting one's deed back", and I remember one little chap who punched another on the nose, then turned to run away, he fell and skinned his knee. When he came crying into one of the schoolrooms, we asked him what had happened, "I got my deed back," he sobbed.

This, too, may seem metaphysical,—but as a lover and student of history,—it seems to me that this "action/reaction" rhythm explains much of what others have called the pendulum theory of history. Think about it.

There is so much more to say and none of us here have done more than barely touch upon the subject of the school, the colony and its influence. But after all, isn't it self-evident? Where else could you find a group of people with such varied background and interest who are drawn back to recall friends and comrades of thirty, forty and for some, more than fifty years ago? And not for some college *class* reunion...but because of an obscure community and school, which was based on that old invitation... "Come let us with our children live." Whatever else we did, *we lived* .

No matter how our paths may have diverged...no matter how some of us may have learned outward conformity, one thing emerges from the three reunions we have had so far...once one has been touched by the Stelton experience, one is never the same again. Inwardly, at least, we have been marked for life.

Jo Ann Wheeler Burbank, now in her eighties, lives in Albany. Your editor was privileged to be able to spend an afternoon recently with this perennially youthful and indomitable woman, along with her son Jon Scott, who is the chairman of the Department of Environmental Studies at the State University of New York at Albany, and with their friend, John Froebel-Parker (John F-P's article on his

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illustrious ancestor appears above). My thanks to Mrs. Burbank for permission to reprint her address.

The community school which Jon attended (see below) was started by Elisabeth and Alexis Ferm on the model of Ferrer's "Escuela Moderna," and was at that time located in Stelton, New Jersey, in the community calling itself "The Colony."

It was a real eye-opener to me to have this first-hand look at Stelton Colony and the New Jersey Modern School through Mrs. Burbank's clear eyes, and to be reminded that we alternative schoolers are simply reinventing a very old wheel indeed!

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

by Jon Thoreau Scott

Many sunny days are wasted,
Many nights are long;
In that deep, dark, dusty prison,
For kids who do no wrong.

—Elizabeth A. Scott, Grade four.

I am reading the comic strip 'Peanuts'.

The little girl says, 'Let me get this straight. If I refuse to go to school they throw me in a dungeon with no food or water for ten years?'

'That's right', says Linus.
She asks, 'But if I go to school, I go for how long?'
'Twelve years', he says.
She replies, 'It's worth thinking about, isn't it?'
Many of us know why.

Why should our schools be thought of as prisons? Could it be that they employ the major function of prisons, confinement? I went to a school which was not like a prison. It was against confinement. It was a school organized by a community of people who desired to have their children attend this special school. It was an early version of what we now call 'Free Schools'.

Our school was based upon the ideas of Francisco Ferrer, a martyred educator who set up 'Escuela Moderna' (Modern Schools) in Spain and was executed for his beliefs that all people should be well-educated, not just an élite few. Ferrer used principles of Friederich Froebel, the German inventor of the Kindergarten, who thought of children as flowers, each with their own individual beauty. Give them good soil and water and they will grow.

In response to Ferrer's execution in 1909, many Modern Schools were established by people, mostly anarchists, who were interested in Ferrer's ideas about individual freedom. I attended a Modern School from the age of two through fourteen beginning in 1934. It was founded in New York City in 1910, but the parents desired a more cohesive community structure and the school took over an old farm in rural Stelton, New Jersey.

In our school there were no classes—unless a group of students decided one was needed—no exams, no grading and no grade levels. Students were not taught, they learned. And they learned those things which were of most interest to the individual student.

The teachers of my school did not teach, they showed the students how to learn and so we discovered that most important requisite of the educated person, self motivation. Older children helped the young ones learn in this 'multi-age' setting. I did not learn to read until I was ten and, of course, it took me only a few days because I was motivated by the desire to read comics books. In a matter of weeks I was reading the young people's classics. I was never taught arithmetic, but at the age of eleven, motivated by jealousy of younger children who could multiply, I learned the multiplication table in less than four hours and learned it well.

Our school had no formal classrooms, no desks for sitting quiet. There were a Kindergarten or play room, art room (the only one with a blackboard), weaving room, ceramics studio, print shop, carpentry and machine shop, large sand-boxes and outdoor play areas, a field for individual garden plots, a small auditorium for meetings and plays, many sports fields and the woods and fields of an old abandoned farm.

There was a stream nearby on which the community built a dam to make a pond for swimming. I spent many pleasant and fruitful hours boating, swimming, fishing, skating, sled-riding and learning the merits of Ambrose Brook, its flora and fauna. Yes, during school hours! Considered as a pedagogical device, a brook is infinitely superior to a classroom where students are forced, like robots, to practice the 'Three R's', so unnecessary to young children, because they have no use for such abstract concepts.

Administrators in Education employ rather useless standardized exams to hold schools 'accountable' for the money spent. Let it be known that I later obtained a PhD degree with a specialty in limnology (study of lakes and streams). That's accountability! Had I been faced with the task of learning those 'R's' at too early an age, instead of discovering the beauty of Ambrose Brook, might my desire to learn about lakes and streams have been critically wounded? Quite likely.

There were only two 'organized' meetings in our day at the Modern School. At 9:00 AM we began the day with announcements and group singing. At 3:00 PM we closed the school day by cleaning the school. There were no janitors. On a weekly rotation, each student was assigned a room to clean and

Missie and Pumpkineers Getting Ready for Hallowe'en

The Monster Mash

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sweep. Periodically we scrubbed and polished floors, painted, repaired things, washed windows and cleaned the school grounds. We ran the heating system and participated in construction when needed. We learned respect for our school and it was always clean. The only other 'requirement' was a weekly meeting, run by the students, where we discussed such things as how the school should be run, discipline problems, organized activities such as over-night hikes and field trips. We learned a bit of demo-cracy.

The community of parents participated in the school in a variety of ways, despite the fact that most had to work for a living. Parents, teachers and students organized events related to the School. These were usually fund raising activities such as lectures, concerts, plays acted by the students, picnics and school fairs or bazaars at which crafts and writings of the students were sold to the public. The students helped print the advertisements for these events and distributed them to each house in the community. Once a month Saturday evenings were devoted to meetings of the parents and teachers on running the school.

I often think that I owe the joy of my early education to the direct interest and involvement of my own family and the people of our community in how our school was run. The community was built around our school and the school was a major part of the community. Everyone contributed and their efforts were benefited. The children were better served than those in the schools run by remote Boards of Education. This simple lesson might well be one of the great 'secrets' that should be applied in today's schools.

Jon Scott is the head of the Atmospheric Sciences Department at the State University of New York at Albany —but this role, valuable as it is, doesn't really begin to define Jon as a person. Jon is a guy who 'walks his talk' in more ways than simply academic ones. He is extraordinarily gentle, self-motivated, naturally democratic, endlessly interested in all facets of life and people—in short, a being who is totally comfortable being himself in his world!

I find this a striking endorsement for his school/community/family upbringing—and, incidentally, also for 'anarchism,' a label which I view as having been so negatively stereotyped by apologists for capitalism that its origin as advocacy for communal and individual self-regulation has been virtually lost. We Free Schoolers are indeed fortunate to have Jon as a friend.

The article that follows details the poignantly tragic fate of one anarchist, Francisco Ferrer, founder of the Modern School Movement, for also 'walking his talk.' I believe it is important to remember such people, remember their courage and integrity. Otherwise, alternative school people of today may find themselves in the position of not knowing who their spiritual ancestors are, and so, making the same mistakes everyone else keeps making in education.

"LA FARIGOLA"—RECOLLECTIONS
by Pura Perez

The last paragraph in the letter that Francisco Ferrer wrote in the "Model Prison" in Madrid on June 1, 1907, says:

> The Rationalist and Scientific teaching of the Modern School embraces the study of everything that supports the freedom of the individual and the harmony of the collective, with the goal of a regime of peace, love and well-being for all without distinction of classes and sex.

When he faced execution, blindfolded, his spiritual vision gave him the courage to cry out to the world: "Long live the Modern School!" The echo of that cry reached all corners of the earth and assured the continuation of his work in education.

Everyone knows the response to his death. And everyone must come to understand that Francisco Ferrer's decision to open his Modern School in Spain came at the time when Spain was suffering its greatest social repression, with conflicts of work stoppages, exploitation and repression against the proletariat; when the Liberal progressive movement was practically crushed. Ferrer's work and determination can only be described as heroic. Francisco Ferrer was not unaware of the obstacles and difficulties that awaited him at every step, especially the reactionary forces whose attacks finally led to his death. After his death these reactionary forces fought to close down the Modern School and all Liberal and secular schools in Barcelona and other parts of the country.

By 1910, when the government was changed, the neglect of education had resulted in the illiteracy of two-thirds of the population. To overcome this, the Liberals strongly desired to create Ferrer schools and to open the closed schools and centers again. With Ferrer's school as a model, the Liberals launched a campaign to open the closed centers (Ateneos) again. In 1910 the Liberal institutions joined with Labor to open many unions (Sindicatos) and their Rational Schools. Anselmo Lorenzo was the leading promoter of these schools. He enjoyed the highest reputation among anarcho-syndicalist militants for his knowledge of education.

At the end of 1917, *Solidaridad Obrera* published the following note.

> We are informed as 1917 comes to an end that the Union 'La Constancia' of the Textile Industry, is opening its School on January 2,1918. The School will be located at 12 Municipal Passage, in the Clot District.

This was the beginning of the Rationalist School called 'Nature School'. It soon came to be called the lovingly popular name, 'La Farigola' (Catalan for a fragrant lovely flower). It is rumored that it got this name because the boys and girls in the school brought bunches of the beautiful flowers home after hikes or picnics in the mountains. Professor Juan Puig Elias was the directing figure in the Nature School from the beginning until July 1936. At that time, Puig Elias became President of the Popular Council in the New Unified School and the Nature School was transferred to a new tower and a better building.

When my sister and I began to attend night classes at 'La Farigola' in September 1933, she was twelve years old and I had just turned fourteen years of age. We had gone to Barcelona in January 1933 from Jativa, a town in the province of Valencia, where we had lived our entire childhood. Luckily we had been able to go to public school. When the Second Republic was proclaimed in 1931, I had had the opportunity to attend High School until the Railroad Company for which my father worked transferred him to the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona.

At first, we encountered many difficulties—great social conflicts, scarcity of housing. As a result, we had to find work immediately. After a few months, we found a less expensive place to live and moved to the Clot District where we became acquainted with the Nature School and registered right away. I remember that we were received very cordially. Professor Puig Elias asked us a few questions and directed us to our seats. He told us that they did not demand much study or set standards or have examinations. I was greatly surprised when asked what I wanted to study. At first I did not understand and took some time to answer—it was so unexpected for me. I was used to being told what I had to learn, what materials to read and study, what to memorize, and to be prepared to compete to win first place in the class. I was speechless when I learned that none of these practices existed in the Nature School.

The classes were stimulating. We found it very easy to establish a relationship with other students. There was no pressure for competition. And I did not observe any propaganda orientation. (My parents had been advised about this because the school was sponsored by the union but there never was propaganda of any kind.)

My preferences were to study science, anatomy and geography. If we needed books that they did not have at the school, we were told to go to the Ateneo Library. There they had every type of book that we could borrow. We also went to the Ateneo on holidays because there were always recreational and cultural activities. This continuous contact helped strengthen the good bonds of friendship and respect. We were able to carry on discussions and be with friends. Adolescence was fading away with all the things we were learning. Social questions were so pressing and absorbing that we were led to dream of a future of justice and freedom.

The schools were all based on the same principles and goals, whether they were called 'Integral Education' as Paul Robin wished to call it, 'Modern School' as Francisco Ferrer called it, or 'Rationalist School' as Juan Puig Elias of the 'Nature School' called it. The important emphasis was the instruction of the children without external authority. Pupils found their own truth. These were schools where the teachers were patient and pleasant guides indicating the roads that lead to the desired goal. In conventional traditional schools, individuals have little initiative, are passive and ready to follow others, because they spend so many years without expressing their own personality or their own energies.

After July 19, 1936, our customary lives changed and we left the school to take on other urgent, necessary tasks. We returned to Valencia once more in June 1937. In Valencia, I was asked to work as a teacher in a collective. Although I did not have the title, the fact that I had studied at 'La Farigola' in Barcelona was a true credit. I accepted on condition that I would be the judge of my work since I was not sure if I would be satisfactory. I remained there until the end of the war.

The Director of the school was an Italian comrade, Vicente Consoli. He came to Spain to fight, but, because of his advanced years, they suggested that he work at his profession and he was sent there. His Spanish was very good and with the passing of time he perfected his accent. The people in the collective regarded him with much affection and in addition to his work as a teacher, he advised them in matters of administration. It should be remembered that, because of the war, many men were away from their homes. Many young people were also away, working on other things. Agricultural workers predominated in the collective and many hands were needed for the work. Women filled the need and children were also asked to help at times with easier tasks. Many adolescents worked full time so that night classes were started for them. There was also a daily meeting for an hour where those who had something to say could discuss conflicts or problems that had arisen during the day.

The school, located in the town plaza, had two large floors. The lower floor was used for meetings and lectures. The upper floor was divided for two classes, with students grouped according to their development. I had a class of 30 of the youngest children. It was my idea that the children's tables be placed in a circle so everyone's face would be in view. This broke with traditional custom but the children loved it. We had various materials that the children worked with their hands. We also had a microscope that was used by the older children and a supply of scholarly materials. Everything went well and the pupils were happy. They suggested what they wanted to do or to learn. Every month we displayed what the classes did downstairs. The parents were satisfied. The days were peaceful. We went to see the vegetable gardens and the orange trees where pupils were able to see the fruit and plants grow. The following day they made drawings of what they had liked. If it had not been for the ghost of war everyone would have been happy because they were living one of the most desired goals of the revolution. As part of our recreational and cultural activities we developed an artistic group to do important projects including stage scenery in other communities. What the collective produced was exchanged with other collectives although most of the supplies were sent to the fronts.

Little by little, more refugee children began to come to the school. We had to find another teacher and volunteers to help us. The number of refugees increased daily. We had to take care of children who were destroyed psychologically by the war. As tragedy followed us our work took on a very different turn. In some cases it was necessary to leave a sister or mother with the children in the school for several days. Our pupils helped us to help these children as no one had thought was possible. The activity was beyond the normal—but there it was and it had to be taken care of. The children of the village brought their own clothes and toys and accompanied the refugee children to their temporary housing. These were spontaneous acts of solidarity and brotherhood that moved everyone.

This was a part of my life, unique and unforgettable, a time that Albert Camus characterized as "The time of Hope." With all these experiences I understand most clearly the importance of the work of a conscientious teacher. I understand why feelings and sentiments of those who have gone to a free school are different from others who did not have such an education. Those who have had such an education are moved by a sense of solidarity and justice toward the oppressed of every class.

—Pura Perez, July, 1989

HAWTHORNE VALLEY FARM SCHOOL:
A Waldorf - Steiner - School
"In the Belly of the Dragon"
)by Kathleen Young

When you're going to give a speech in our circles, you want to quote somebody. The most quotable act in town is John Gatto so I had a hard time tonight figuring out how I was going to start because you've got the man himself here.

So I was pondering about this and I thought I'd come up with a bit of a dragon—we always like to talk about dragons - you may not believe in them but I do. I have a feeling that all of us have arrived in the belly of the dragon. That we have, somehow, brought ourselves tonight to hear the ideals we all have (to give us courage). And I was working on this, and I was sitting at my desk, and I had a letter that I had opened. It was from France and it said, 'Dear Director', or whatever it is that the book from French to English tells you to say when you're writing a letter to America, and it said: 'We have heard about your school, and we have heard about the dream of Karl Ege, and we want the dream to come true in our little village in France.'

And this I found most astonishing and most frightening. Because in a certain sense Karl Ege's dream has taken us to where we are - and as I just said, I think we're in the belly of the dragon - and I wondered how to answer the man.

Karl Ege was an educator. He was working here in New York City in the Rudolf Steiner school on East 79th Street. He and his colleagues thought that students in the city needed a country experience. He felt that the students needed the farm and the life on the land. He and his friends began to look for a farm. And they looked and they looked, apparently they looked at many sites, and they found a farm in Columbia County upstate, about two hours' drive, and they purchased this farm.

Now, if you go to this farm you will find a thriving, bio-dynamic place. The cows are well, the chickens are well, the pigs are well, the farmers are well, the apprentices are well... The farmers have succeeded. They make yoghurt; they have a bakery. They make quark cheese - which you can only get in Switzerland and Hawthorne Valley Farm.

Very soon after, the school started across the street from the farm. And the little school has grown to 300 students, a full nursery through 12th grade program. The dream of Karl Ege was to combine the work on the land with the work of education, and to 'warm it up' - to supplement it, to make it *live* through work with artists and artisans in the community.

And so a painting school was started. And there's a little printing endeavor. There are many efforts to bring about an answer to this incredible artistic need we have. Farmers have it. Teachers have it. Students have it. Parents have it.

And there is this hope that one could integrate all these dreams together, to make *one* that would live.

In addition, we have this little house where children can come from all over, and they can stay for a week at a time in the visiting student's program. The students that visit love to get up and gather the milk and the eggs at 4 and 5 in the morning. Perhaps they study some geology, perhaps they study some botany, or perhaps they go cross-country skiing - but all have this life on the land which was part of the dream.

We have been there 18 years, and we have felt good *and* bad about what we do. Hawthorne Valley is a Waldorf School, and Waldorf schools have a whole theory about the developing child.

One day we had two or three visitors from the New York State Education Department, and we welcomed them. They were lovely people, well-dressed and articulate, very warm and interested in what we do. And these visitors were spread out in the school; they stayed for the day. And they said to us they were looking for a developmental approach to education in New York State.

That we have. So we put them in various places, and we held our breath while they went around through the day. We tried to guide them into our school life.

If they went to the kindergarten they would have seen children playing. They would have seen children baking bread or making soup. They make the most remarkable soup. It's made with a pot of water and anything any child brings in that day. I have never understood how they make such delicious soup that way. But their mothers send in either what's very fresh or what's very unfresh, whichever the case may be, and they chop it and scrape it, and they put it in the pot - and someone comes along and adds *something*, because it's a *wonderful* soup.

And the kids learn to paint - they have watercolor classes - and they do various things. But they don't learn to read, they don't have computer classes, and we hope to God they don't watch television. These children are guided through the day in play and in love and in the most beautiful surroundings we can create. They learn French. They learn German in our school. Both through song and poetry. Children are happy in our school.

If our visitor went to grades one through eight, they would have had eight *different* kinds of experiences. In our school the teacher carries a class through eight years. In our way, whatever happens between the students and the teacher has a strong element of a *bond* to it. So if I'm the teacher in the fourth grade and I've had the children for four years, I can say, "Remember when?" and "Remember when?" and, together, that *moment* is discipline enough. Both of us remember what happened then, and we can go on from there.

The teacher who carries the class, grades one through eight, has the task of changing himself or herself every day because he must meet a growing human being. And if you *don't* change, you're the one who gets out. The children tell you instantly if you haven't understood. And you know that there's nothing wrong with *them*, there's something wrong with you.

You can figure it out. You go home and cry a little bit and you figure it out. And the next day there's something else that you have to figure out. And so for eight years you grow together.

The children make their own books. They create their own literature. And they find *reading* their own literature the easiest thing in the world—because it comes from the inside out. If a child cannot read in our school, we work with him to see what else he can do. And we work on that a lot. He can sing or he can play music or he can draw beautiful pictures. And we work with that until the moment when he decides to read. And then *he* reads, to us. In this way the children grow strong in their confidence.

The main material is taught in a two-hour stretch of time in the morning. The academic work is in the morning when the children are awake and the teachers are awake. Then we try to flow through the rest of the day with much artistic activity. The children are very lively.

I taught a class for eight years, and I ran into some of the girls in the hall today. They were quite surprised that their teacher could get dressed up and look decent enough to "go out" in the world! I said, "I'm going to talk about you a lot at Carnegie Hall," and they said, "Please don't!" I said, "Ohhh, remember, remember the second grade," and they got fear on their faces. And then they lightened up when they realized I wasn't *really* going to tell you what happened in the second grade!

These children were strong, sturdy, healthy children. A mother described these children in an interview as "having creative leadership potential". And I had a whole class of children with creative leadership potential! And in the kindergartens when I first went to just look at the children and try to see whether I would be able to take on such a job, some of them were under the cupboards, and some of them were under the chairs, and some of them were out in the halls, and some of them had run into the little bathrooms... because *they* knew who I was. And I said (to myself), 'This is the group I want.' So the first day of school they came and sat down in lovely little wooden chairs at lovely little wooden desks in lovely little rows and I thought, 'Of course, this is what children love to do.'

After about 15 minutes sitting at these desks they started wiggling, and I started learning how to teach.

Now we have a very fine possibility to learn about Man through history and fairy tales, as well as through current events. The classic literature is available to us. But we have the freedom to choose within this literature curriculum, this history curriculum, what actually will meet this individual child's needs, or this group of children, - what will speak to them, to their hearts, so that they will know who they are when we finish the story.

We tell stories and try not to read them. It's a very interesting thing—if you've experienced the difference when you tell a story or read a story—because the interaction is so strong in 'telling' that you're building this bond.

Mathematics? Through all the different ways of trying to find the mystery of numbers, the mystery of fractions: Cake, pizza, whatever the teacher loves the best, starting with cutting it into fractions. And you find these metabolic ways, if you're a teacher like me, to find these ways to teach whatever the children need to know.

Now, if you've done your job rightly, whenever the children are in the eighth grade they say, 'Mrs. Young... you're so weeiirrdd!' And then you know that they are ready to move on.

And if you've done your job right, and the student feels comfortable with the practical arts, they will feel... I...CAN...DO...ANYTHING. I can be anybody. I can go anywhere. I can stand on my feet in the world and I can make a difference.

Now, at the end of the day when our visitors were finished with their inspection, I sat down with them. And I wasn't sure what they would have found in the various places because a variety of things could have happened. I thought perhaps it would be the music or the painting... and we sat together and I said, 'Well?' They shook their heads and began to look very doubtful, and I thought, 'Oh, Lord, what did they see?!' And they said, 'The problem is you seem to like the children.'

I'm not kidding, that's what they said. And they said, 'Furthermore, you seem to like each other.' And they said they had actually seen us talking in the halls together. They thought that was the most astonishing thing that could not be translated to the New York public school system.

I think we are in the belly of the dragon. I think we led ourselves there. Maybe *out of fear of being on the outside* of the dragon because they are so ugly. We have to get together to lead ourselves and our children out. We connected with some of John Gatto's ideas in relationship to young people finding their way in the world through apprenticeships, through community service, through a connection with the world. In our quiet valley in upstate New York it's critical that we help some young people come to adulthood with the confidence they are with us in the way *out*. We can't do it unless we join hands with all the rest who see that.

We feel that if it, the dragon, has come even to Columbia County, and we can see it, that the hour is probably late and we must move together.

Kathleen Young is the director of Hawthorne Valley School, a very successful Waldorf school (inspired by the thought of nineteenth century German mystic Rudolph Steiner) in the mid-Hudson valley district of New York state. This account of her school is taken from her Carnegie Hall presentation in 1991.

THE LEARNING COMMUNITY: A SHORT-LIVED DIOCESAN "SCHOOL WITHIN A SCHOOL"

This poignant piece was contributed by a former student, Bob Knipe, who still mourns the loss of his school.

From the student newspaper, announcing the death of their school):

ADMINISTRATION TO L.C.: "DROP DEAD!"

by Steve Anderson

Jack Penha, speaking on behalf of all the teachers, announced today, at a mass community meeting held in room 17 that, 'There will be no Learning Community at Mater Christi next year.' Some 'OH NOs', 'WHATs' and 'YOUR KIDDINGs' came from the students but most of 'he community was silent, almost as if it were expected.

Mr. Penha went on to explain why. Many students expected to have a community of 120 seniors and four teachers. This was part of a proposal offered by the administration. However, the teachers felt that this cut, along with other compromises made in the past, would leave the Learning Community 'only a hollow shell.'

The teachers met and decided that they would operate a community next year only if certain concessions were made. These proposals were presented to the administration at a meeting before the exam recess. Here is what they presented in part:

> Having operated the Learning Community since September, 1972; having received praise and thanks of...students and parents...

The document went on to give a few of the many L.C. praises and accomplishments and state the Learning Community's proposals:

> ...we must now conclude that the request...taken with the...other compromises... made through the years... indicates that the Learning Community would stand only as a hollow shell of its former philosophy and practice.

It goes on to state that the community would not be worth operating, and the system would insure the death of the community and make it 'a dumping ground for way-ward seniors.' It goes on:

> Therefore... we have agreed ... to accept the administration's proposals... but only with... modifications.

These modifications, in short, were:

1. That the community be made of *juniors* and seniors.
2. The 'garden' would be opened, as it was until this year.
3. The budget would be allotted to the number of students.
4. Any evaluation of the community should be made through instruments for a school within the school program, as opposed to the former system.
5. Juniors presently in the community who take main school classes will be allowed to continue to take them next year.

The document was signed by Messrs. Penha, Powell, Gilroy, Azrak, Therway, and Siegel. These proposals were rejected by the administration and thus there will be no community next year. When asked for the reasons for the rejection Mr. Penha stated,

> They gave none, nor did we ask for any.
>
> After all, there's a lot of years we are up against. For a long, long time, both teachers and students have been conditioned to look at school and each other in certain narrow ways. What is crucial is for us to look at each other as human beings with a common goal. We all have rules to abide by. Some of them we personally may disapprove of. While we argue to change them and while we work through the available channels to change them, we are forced to abide by them in order to protect and preserve what we have achieved: the Learning Community.
>
> Clearly, as most of you have learned, it is possible to take advantage of the rights granted to us in the Community. Freedom is always like that. But it is still worth it. Most - the vast majority - have recognized that to take advantage of our freedom will ultimately destroy it. And that makes me proud.
>
> Because I prefer to believe that freedom is good for people, that people are naturally good and respond well to freedom.

Of course, we are all human. And that means we all make mistakes. All of us have bad days, lazy days, hungover days.

And finally, thanks to you, for allowing six teachers to have a place where we, too, can be ourselves, find freedom and enjoy school.

Looking Back And Ahead

November, 1975

by James W. Penha

Every year, something happens here in the Learning Community. For some reason, there seem to be more smiles per square foot than anywhere else in the building. And more learning. And more humanity. No matter what the confusion, what misunderstandings, what problems have to be confronted in those first weeks - and this year, there were a fair share - somehow, in some way, the Community works.

Why? Is it the faculty? To some degree, maybe. But I should like to believe that any six teachers, not just us who believe in this kind of school could make it work. Is it one course or another? No. They have been different every year.

I think what makes the Learning Community successful year after year is a principle: living and learning are fostered when personal commitment replaces selfishness, when agreement and logic and consensus replace ridiculous rules and laws, and when every individual feels that his voice, his feelings, his very being, makes a difference.

Hopefully, you are not yet sick of hearing about the ideas upon which the United States was founded. Whatever varied opinions we may hold about how America has lived up to those principles, we do, I have found, agree in general that the ideals of democracy and freedom are good and true. If they are right for a nation, then they are right for every part of that nation - including schools.

That's what the Learning Community is all about. And just as citizens get the government they deserve, students will get the school they deserve. Our requests that you make suggestions for improvement of structures and courses rather than just nod out or complain, that you make it your business to get to know people in the Community other than your old, small circle of friends, that you express yourself freely, that you work your tail off for the best education possible - these requests are real. And although the past few months have been great - thanks to you - we will never stop growing and improving.

The Student Bill of Rights

IN ORDER TO FUNCTION IN THE SPIRIT OF TRUE LEARNING, WE REQUEST THE ADMINISTRATION TO AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING MEASURES, AND TO HELP ENFORCE THEM NOW AND IN THE FUTURE .

STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS:

1. Have advance notice of all regulation changes with the idea of being able to vote on acceptance or rejection.

2. Elect and impeach their student government officials (president, vice-president).

3. Wear any neat, comfortable clothes to school with the exception of dungarees, T-shirts, sneakers, tube tops, and halters.

4. Petition other members of the student body and faculty without fear of retribution in the form of marks, suspension, detention, expulsion, or any other means there of,

5. No member of the faculty or administration shall administer any form of physical punishment to any student, except in event of physical attack by the student.

6. The activity fee will be paid by the individual provided on the number of activities each student participates in.

7. Smoking in second parking lot permitted only during free time and lunch periods.

8. The right of the student to petition a hearing in the student court consisting of an equal number of students, and faculty whenever the student feels that any of his/ her rights have been violated.

SIGNED,
THE COMITTEE

MODEL-BUILDING

DESIGNING ALTERNATIVES FOR SUCCESS:
from the Hofstra University Center for the Study of Educational Alternatives, Hempstead, New York 11550

Evidence to date suggests that each of the following features plays an important part in the success of an alternative school or program. The more of them associated with a program, the better its chances for sustaining success.

° There is a fair degree of freedom from standard district operating procedures .

° Staff choose to be there, rather than being assigned.

° Students choose to be there, rather than being assigned.

° Existing staff have a strong voice in selecting new staff and students.

° The alternative represents a genuine, continuing educational option for its students, rather than a beef-em-up-and-send-em-back operation.

° The program is designed by those who will operate it—its staff—and the staff are also in a position to modify it as conditions warrant.

° The program begins small—with perhaps fewer than 100 students—and a doubled enrollment remains the limit.

° The requisites of coherence and group identification are met: a separate space, and a substantial part of the school day spent together by the alternative's students and staff.

° The alternative school exerts high levels of control over the various features of its programs.

° High levels of teacher autonomy are reflected.

° The most secure programs cost no more than standard programs in the district, in terms of per pupil expenses.

° The alternative begins with a two- or three- year commitment — with an evaluation planned to occur toward the end of that period.

HOW TO KILL THE NEW ALTERNATIVE FROM THE START

Each of the following features reduces the likelihood of success of a new alternative. The more of them found in a program, the more remote the chances for yielding the benefits which alternative education can bring.

° It is designed by administrators, not its staff.

° It is imported from somewhere else and set into operation pretty much intact, as it worked elsewhere.

° The program is a referral program to which students are assigned.

° The alternative is a 'last chance' program which a student must 'choose' in order to avoid suspension or expulsion.

° The program is punitive in orientation.

° The alternative is built around a single cluster of new elements — perhaps a new curriculum or a new set of activities—but holds all other features of school operation intact and unmodified.

° The alternative is treated just as any new department within the school—or new school within the district—might be. It is expected to conform to existing regulations, operating procedures and arrangements.

° Staff are assigned to the alternative by administrators outside it —or by automatic processes such as contract rights.

° The alternative is intended for the "toughest" cases and designed to reflect the absolutely minimal departure from traditional school practice necessary to accommodating them.

° No one in the district is told very much about the new program —and guidance counselors are left to remain lukewarm to negative about it.

THE LEARNING SOCIETY
by Robert Theobald
(from *Turning the Century*, Chapter 5)

Human beings are now co-creators of the future. The large-scale decisions that must be made during the nineties will inevitably determine the shape of the twenty-first century and whether conditions will worsen or improve for the population of the globe.

I have already argued for the further development of the ideals which lie behind democracy. I now want to connect democracy, good communication, effective decisionmaking and profoundly new forms of education. Sir Geoffrey Vickers was a remarkable Englishman who studied the critical importance of effective and honest communication for future survival. In a speech given in Spokane in 1974 he concluded a highly provocative speech with a set of ideas which I cite at length because of their critical importance:

> 1. The world we live in demands and depends on skill in communication and in knowledge relevant to communication to an extent far beyond anything previously known....
>
> 2. Communication also depends on trust ... and imposes on communicators a duty to sustain the level of communication, not only by their skill and knowledge but by being trustworthy communicators.
>
> 3. This is the more important because there is a "law" of communication similar to "Gresham's Law" in economics. Bad communication drives out good communication. A small minority with a few bombs and a lot of self-righteousness can soon reduce the level of communication in a whole society to the basic level of mutual threat.
>
> 4. Thus the duty I have described assumes an importance, as well as a difficulty, which can hardly be exaggerated. It seems to me a trans-cultural human duty to sustain the level of communication, to resist its debasement and to cooperate in raising it.

5. The direction in which this duty points seems to me to me the direction of the more human, rather than the less human; a vector which we can recognize as transcultural and which claims the allegiance of the whole species. It may be the only dimension in which any kind of progress is possible. It is surely a precondition for progress of any other kind.

I had first become aware of the importance of this point back in the sixties. A close colleague published a book in which he cited some figures which seemed totally unrealistic to me. I challenged him on their validity. He told me he knew the figures were wrong but he believed they were the way to manipulate people so they would decide to move in the direction he thought was appropriate. It was clear to me, however, that the distortion he had chosen was just as likely to result in the opposite result as the one he desired. The only hope any of us can have to move events in appropriate directions is to tell the truth as honestly as we can and to listen to others do we can evaluate their understandings. The belief that our ideas are necessarily right, and that it is therefore proper for us to lie to advance our particular cause, is part of industrial-era patterns.

It is in the context of Sir Geoffrey Vickers arguments that America s decisions in the Gulf War of 1991 so clearly moved us in negative directions. It will be impossible to move beyond power policies until it is fully realized why they do not work. Power has always been seen as desirable because it could be used to force others to behave in the way that the person with power wanted. So long as systems were closed, power was effective. So long as slavery was an agreed system, the slave had no options. He could not hide and he could not run.

To look at the same issue on a broader scale, the colonial powers were largely able to enforce their will in the nineteenth century because they had an effective monopoly of both technological and moral force. The white races believed that they had the truth and the right to enforce it. They were largely invincible under these circumstances.

The twentieth century has seen the breakdown of this model from two sides. First, the rest of the world has come to believe that their views are also of value. There is a growing challenge to Western values from other traditions ranging from the Moslem to the Chinese. In addition, the West's views are also under challenge from within as more and more thoughtful people deny the right of the West to impose their values in a world which is increasingly seen as diverse and pluralistic.

In these circumstances, power will inevitably backfire. This is the lesson everybody must learn from the Gulf War is even worse errors are not to be made in the future. The powers which were led by the United States were able to overcome Iraq. But the amount of power used developed and defined massive counterforces which will play themselves out on the world scene for years and decades to come. There were two propaganda campaigns during the Iraq war and they were both successful with their own publics. The allies succeeded in portraying Hussein as a devil and created strong support. But at the same time Hussein was able to create pride and anger in the Arab and Moslem world.

The primary error was made by the United States which used an obsolete colonial model. It was right to react strongly to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, although one must wonder why this act of Iraq's proved the last straw rather than earlier intolerable patterns such as the use of chemical weapons on the Kurds. One can also wonder why it was the violence in the Gulf which led to such a strong reaction rather than far more destructive violence elsewhere in the world, particularly Cambodia.

Oil was obviously the special factor which led to the extraordinary reaction by the world community, led by America. Nevertheless, the invasion of Kuwait could have been an opportunity to move toward a new standard of world order. And the initial embargo proved the potential for many countries in the world to unite across cultural and religious boundaries. The world's cohesion could have provided an opportunity for the Middle East states to look at the long-run problems and begin to work to defuse the festering problems of millennia. The problem was that the Bush Administration did not have the patience for a prolonged test of wills. In October, George Bush embarked on an offensive, rather than a containment, course which made war inevitable.

The cause of negotiation and dialogue has therefore been set back just at the time when there is most need for it. The survival of the world in the twenty-first century depends on a growing willingness to work through the tough issues of our time in the belief that everybody will strive to find just and equitable answers. The Iraqi war made it less possible to believe that dialogue and negotiation is the wave of the future.

In addition, the Iraqi war took the world s attention to such an extent that profoundly negative dynamics took place elsewhere without effective challenge from other countries. The Soviet Union was able to reimpose dictatorial styles without much outside attention. China was able to continue its crackdown on dissidents with far less danger of a backlash. In addition, there was little time, attention and energy to deal with other festering issues such as the Savings and Loan Crisis. One day early in the war, there was a demand for an additional $30 billion dollars to manage this issue. The TV commentator, when reporting it at the very end of the news bulletin, stated that this would almost certainly have been the lead story if the Gulf War were not in progress.

The rich countries, and the current decision-makers in the poor counties, have every reason to make resort to force less likely rather than to accept it as the way to settle disputes in the future. The rich have much to lose by violence; the poor have far less. The nightmare scenario for the future is that the poor people of the world will decide that there is no possibility of influencing the rich to treat them with fairness and will move toward continuing terrorism. The time is already very late. The difficulties which were already inevitable in the nineties have been magnified dramatically by the Gulf crisis.

(This material is written in late January. It will be enlarged and revised before publication in the light of events.)

New educational directions.

The belief that it is possible and necessary to resolve disagreements without violence requires a profoundly new mind-set. If we are to survive, our children must learn this lesson at the same time as they discover how to cope with a universe of diversity and rapid change. We must create an educational system which prepares students to live in a complex world and have constructive ideas about appropriate directions. The approaches designed to meet these goals will necessarily be profoundly different from those which existed in the industrial era.

The educational world is locked in a major struggle at the current time. On one side, there are those who want to maintain current schooling patterns while improving their efficiency. People who hold this view argue that there is nothing seriously wrong with what is taught by industrial-era schools and colleges if only they would recommit to their traditional goals of providing the best current answers to questions and testing people on their recall of what they have learnt.

Those on the other side of the argument believe that students need to learn fundamentally different styles and skills than those taught in the industrial era if they are to survive in the twenty-first century. They propose that instead of solely measuring mastery of content, people should also be evaluated in terms of their ability to learn to learn on a continuing basis.

Grasping the nature of the educational debate and its direction is increasingly difficult. Both sides are tending to use the same rhetoric but the proposals they make would have very different consequences. There are also major surprises as one evaluates the arguments used to support the various positions. For example, many of those who reject the need for radical reform support their case by quoting the success of the Japanese educational system. They do not recognize that there are major worries, both in Japan and outside, about the long-run consequences of the rigid Japanese system which does not promote creativity.

There are at least four major areas of disagreement between those who believe that fundamental change is necessary and those who are convinced t.hat reform of current systems will he enough. First the current system concentrates on what happens in schools and colleges while those who want change argue that education must be broadened to include parents, churches, the media and indeed all the forces that cause people to see the world in a new way. Second, the current system concentrates on the period from 5 to 15, 18, 22 or 30 while those who want change look at the whole of life from conception to death. Third, the current system uses a very limited number of styles of learning while those who want change prove that different people learn in a large variety of ways. Fourth, those who want to preserve the current system opt for a broadened core curriculum while those who want fundamental change believe it can only be achieved by treating everybody as an individual.

Traditional schooling.

America's rambunctious social systems provide freedom and result in creativity. Unfortunately, traditional schooling patterns still undermine the imagination we shall increasingly need as we enter the twenty-first century. One of the most urgent tasks is to face fully why the skills of the past will no longer meet the needs of the future. The profound, underlying messages of traditional schools are to:

- obey those in charge without question,
- put excessive emphasis on specializations
- erect rigid boundaries between courses, particularly between the arts, sciences and humanities
- expect certainty and stability.

- understand that the world is divided into superiors and inferiors and therefore learn to struggle to be on top.

How are these lessons taught? The teacher and the principal are authority figures with the right to reward and punish. Children and young adults are expected to obey the rules, largely without question. Margaret Mead had a wry comment on this pattern. She pointed out that a child who left school for the real world at the age of 15 or 18 is expected to make decisions for themselves while the high-school and university student continues to be protected within an artificial world.

Traditional teachers also lead their students to believe that there are answers to all questions. Most students therefore see no necessity to be creative because they are brought up to believe that the teacher knows the proper response. This pattern also lleads them to expect certainty and stability. One of the most difficult steps in my own career came when I discovered that there was often nobody on whom I could rely to do my thinking for me and that I had to work through new realities for myself.

The acceptance of expertise becomes ingrained over time. In the sixties I managed, after great effort, to convince a particular teacher that he ought to consider working with students in a dialogue mode. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when he came back after one hour in the classroom saying; "Well, I tried to get the students involved but they weren't interested. I always knew you were wrong when you talked about the potential of kids."

One of the reasons it is difficult to get students educated within traditional models to talk freely is that industrial-era patterns of grading impose a model of superiority and inferiority. They force people to see themselves as "good" or "bad" students. Good students are, however, often those who feedback to teachers what they have previously been taught. Bad students are those who tend to rebel against the system: they are often those who are either very bright or those who find the whole process of schooling irrelevant to their needs and potentials. Their ideas are therefore frequently the most novel but they tend to be silent because they have been squashed in the past.

The imposition of a single method of evaluating people also prevents us from recognizing the various types of skills that exist. The model which used to exist in the one-room school where teachers found a valid reason to give a prize to all students for something they did well should be emulated today.

The concept of grading is flawed in many ways. The most crucial is that we now know that passing and failing grades are based in large part on the relationship of the teacher to the student. Good students are nurtured and therefore do better: weak students are often ignored and do worse. Grades are therefore, in large part, a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is a classic story in this area. On one occasion, a teacher was provided with a list which reversed the grades of students. At the end of the year most of the young people had met the expectations which were thus generated. Weak students blossomed under the attention. Those who had previously done well, withered as they were ignored.

The message that there is a top and a bottom in society is central to current schooling systems. If these are the only options, then most people will find it infinitely more attractive to be one of those with power and money than to be without. Indeed, once people have experienced the attractiveness of superiority, even equality with others begins to sour for many of them. This is the viewpoint which Gilbert announced in one of his comic operas claiming that "when everybody's somebody, then no one's anybody."

On the other hand, some people resign themselves to being on the bottom. They downgrade the very real skills they have and come to feel that they have no significant contribution to make. The waste of human potential which occurs in this way is huge and chilling.

A new educational model.

During 1990 I worked with a group drawn from all parts of Lewis and Clark Community College in the RiverBend area of Illinois, just north of St. Louis. After a good deal of struggle, we managed to reach conclusions which stressed very different challenges from those of the past.

The statement said:

> We believe that education empowers individuals by giving them choices. Education enables them to develop their personal potential by eliminating or bridging obstacles. Education allows citizens to participate in the political, economic, scientific, technological and aesthetic progress of their culture to the greatest possible extent. Formal education is not an end in itself, it supports a learning process which continues throughout life.

Lewis and Clark Community College is a community of learners, mutually committed to the pursuit of excellence in the learning process and to providing open access to education. This is the vision which has inspired the community college movement from the beginning and it has resulted in a system of education which is significantly different from the traditional one.

We are committed to creating an environment in which creativity can flourish. We believe that progress is the result of purposeful, systemic, rational and compassionate decision-making. The most effective learning occurs when conscious and consistent efforts are made to integrate theory and practice.

Members of this learning community are characterized by:

- a sense of the responsibilities of global citizenship and environmental stewardship—an ability to work with others and to share skills to achieve goals
- a flexible mind able to adapt quickly to change
- a wide range of communication skills, including reading, writing, listening and speaking
- an ability to make ethical and moral decisions
- an ability to analyze problems and think critically
- a mastery of independent learning—a mastery of appropriate content.

While content will still be important in the future, the primary teaching in the compassionate era is about process so people can keep up with the pace of change. Learning process skills is the very basis of our survival in the twenty-first century. One of the primary needs for discovering process skills is to show people why they must learn to live in a value-based culture and honor diversity.

Learning about process takes place in every formal and informal communication. We can no longer afford to look solely, or even primarily, at schools and colleges for the source of education. We must involve families, friends, churches, communities, work-places, television, computers etc. All of them provide information about different patterns of behavior which can be examined and considered as possibilities for ourselves.

Unfortunately, all too many of the images we and our children see and hear are not conducive to learning to live in a value-based world. This is the fundamental argument for changing the ways messages are sent in our culture. If people are to behave positively, they must be able to find positive models in real life, in television and in art. Unfortunately, these are in scarce supply, particularly for minority communities.

Process teaching enables people to learn the skills to live in the questions of our time without seeking for premature closure and slick responses. It enables each of us to understand that the same events can be seen in very different ways by people with different viewpoints. For example, interpretations of events are often very different in the rich and the poor countries or between whites and non-whites. The belief that there can be a single, definitively correct answer is obsolete. Directions can therefore no longer be appropriately imposed based on the power of a single group.

We therefore need to understand the profoundly different viewpoints which exist within societies, let alone throughout the world. The Japanese film *Rashomon* was one of the first to help us grasp how differently the same event could be understood. A story of violence by a Samurai warrior toward a woman was depicted from various angles. The viewer was left to decide where the truth lay. I would still recommend this film as one way to start a discussion of how to uncover the various truths in a situation where people disagree about what really happened.

Any honest search for reality always requires us to understand the different views of the various participants and their behavior patterns. Edward T. Hall's book, *The Silent Language* was the first one which helped the general public grasp that a positive signal in one area of the world might be viewed as an insult in another. Much of science-fiction also deals with this problem of cross-cultural communication. It is immensely helpful for students to encounter different models of reality when they are young because this prepares them for the increasing diversity of the world they will have to manage in their adult years.

Conflicts can turn violent when the participants on various sides of an issue all feel that their case is the best one and that they are "winning." One of the problems of the Iraqi war was that both sides felt for a very long time that they were achieving their goals. There was little recognition among the decision-makers on either side that the assumptions and belief systems were so different that total misunderstandings were not only probable, but almost inevitable given the initial stands of Presidents Bush and Hussein.

Once one recognizes that the messages people send are far more complex than the words they say, one learns that it is useful to know body language and styles to help understand what is really going on. When is a person telling the truth and when are they shading it or deliberately lying? Is a person shy or aggressive? Is an individual a natural leader or can she be encouraged to be a leader? What are the goals which their cultural upbringing has taught them to value? Are they similar to one's own or widely divergent?

Another needed learning is to discover the most appropriate medium for sending messages. One can use words and art and games and video and audio and computers and telephones. Each of these has its own quirks and implications. Some people learn best from one medium and some from another. Some lessons are best learnt using one medium and others are best communicated in another. Each of us have different skills and can communicate best using one medium or another.

One interesting way to gain additional insights about how communication really takes place is to learn another language. Perfect translations from one language to another are impossible because a language carries a worldview with it. One can say different things in French than one can in English. Indeed I can be a "different" person when speaking French than when speaking English. Everybody can benefit from knowing another language. Unfortunately, languages are taught at the wrong time in children's lives. There is clear evidence that learning a language is fun before the age of 10. In teen-age years and at college it is a chore, if not worse. As a result far fewer people know languages than could be the case.

There are, of course, other "languages" besides French, Spanish, Hopi, English etc. For example, physics is a language which provides a unique way of looking at the world. I first understood this when I was being driven back from a speaking date. A high school physicist explained to me that he did not primarily teach the experiments physicists performed when working with students who were only taking a single course in physics. Instead he concentrated on why he personally found it interesting to look at the world as a physicist. Similarly, astronomers and engineers and artists and physicians and plumbers and electricians and golfers all have unique views which are worth understanding. This is the reason I find it easy to talk with other people and to learn from them. I find the world they have chosen to live in fascinating even if I do not have the time to enter it for myself—and in some cases would not want to have anything to do with it.

Once people have learned effective communication skills, the next step is to encourage them to work with each other so they can benefit from diverse understandings. Most work in school and college today is evaluated on an individual basis. In the future far more activity needs to be carried out at the team level because this type of collective process is what people will experience in much of their adult lives. In addition, much of this study needs to be supported by people outside the academic system who are in touch with current realities rather than academic theories.

In most cases, this collaborative work should not be designed to teach students answers which are already known. Rather groups should be asked to struggle to resolve a question where multiple responses are possible or, even, when no correct answer is known at all. When this approach is taken, the student no longer struggles to discover the reply they think the teacher wants. Instead they learn that imagination and creativity are qualities which will bring rewards. One of my recurrent dreams throughout my work life has been that we shall involve young people in dealing with real issues. It is exciting to think what could happen if we encouraged students to deal with the current possibilities and problems in their community and give them the credit for doing so.

New forms of evaluation.

There are many forms of competence. One of the tragedies of industrial-era educational systems is that they usually reduce their measurements to a single type of test and assumed that this could determine how valuable a student really is. This is the pattern which forces simplistic models of inferiority and superiority on others. The tendency to think in terms of top and bottom would be greatly reduced if there was a recognition of the many different ways people can excel.

Bruce Campbell set out the issues in a piece written for *In Context* magazine:

> In recent years, new definitions of intelligence have gained acceptance and have dramatically enhanced the appraisal of human competence. Howard Gardner of Harvard University in his book, *Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences,* suggests that there at least seven human intelligences, two of which, *verbal/linguistic* intelligence and *logical/mathematical* intelligence, have dominated the traditional pedagogy of western societies.
>
> The five non-traditional intelligences, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal,

> have generally been overlooked in education. However, if we can develop ways to teach and learn by engaging all seven intelligences, we will increase the opportunities for student success and create the opportunity to, in Margaret Mead's words, "weave a social fabric in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place."

There are two fundamental approaches which can be built into educational systems. One of them assumes that it is critically important that every student learn a core curriculum and that if they are failing at one subject in this curriculum they should spend more time on it. This approach is designed to assure that there are no major gaps in an individual's knowledge. The problem is that it concentrates on palliating weakness rather than developing strengths, because most of the time will have to be spent in bringing people up to speed on the topics where they have most difficulty.

The other approach is to provide the student with a system which permits them to do well at the subjects where their strengths are. Most effort can then be spent developing the student's skill is and making sure that they go as far with their competence as they can. The advantage with this approach is that the student finds out where their commitments are and moves with them. The possible disadvantage is that they will not be compelled to learn some subjects which might be eventually useful to them. If, however, one believes that people tend to make good decisions when they are given responsible freedom, this problem can be overcome by good counselling.

The two models I have described in the last paragraphs are pure models and it is of course necessary to find a point somewhere in between them. But there is no doubt in my mind about where the emphasis must be placed. It is better for students to develop their strengths than to spend their time struggling with subjects where they will fail. Future educational systems should provide people with the learning opportunities which fit their skills and measure their abilities along scales which are appropriate to the type of activities in which they are engaged.

There should also be a major shift in the way we work with those who are unlikely to be interested in academics. At the current time, the pattern is that students are typically taught using the same basic track until they get into middle or high school. Then those who are not "good" enough to go on to college suddenly get shunted onto a vocational or general education track which usually seems like failure to them and to their parents.

We should, on the contrary, provide alternative tracks for students who do not fit the "verbal/linguistic" and "logical/mathematical" styles from the time they are born. Societies must recognize the need for many types of skills. Indeed, I sometimes think there is more danger that the world will come apart because of a lack of plumbers and electronic engineers than from a shortage of thinkers! I also am more worried about the lack of people who have empathy as compared to those who concentrate on logical analysis.

There are a growing number of tests which can enable parents and children to learn at an early age what types of activities are most appropriate for their young people. These tests are not foolproof, of course, and they should not be used to force a child to take a route which does not seem desirable to him or her. But there will be fewer problems in education if we teach people using the styles which come naturally to them rather than assuming that the book and the lecture are the optimum teaching tool for everybody.

A commitment to providing a relevant education for everybody will also require us to face a very difficult issue. There is now clear-cut evidence that abused children very often turn into abusing parents, and also frequently into criminals. In less extreme cases, children who do not get excited by the potential of learning in their first five years are unlikely to do so when at school.

If the cycle of poverty and abuse is to be broken, young children will need far more support than they currently get from conception to their entry into school. I do not need to stress the complexity of providing this type of support. Bureaucracies are unable to work with the required sensitivity. There will have to be a totally changed approach which can only be developed at the community level.

It is difficult to discuss this topic without falling back into the industrial-era trap which saw the intellectual as bright and everybody else as dumb. But this is exactly the opposite of the point I am making! The problem of our culture is that we have given too much importance to those who can think logically and far too little to those whose thought structures do not fit industrial-era norms. I am proposing that the attitudes of not only schools and colleges but also the total culture be changed to mesh with the realities of the compassionate era.

Giving people a chance to learn about their strengths and be comfortable with them will also make them more able to live in the diverse and pluralistic world which is inevitable in the future. All of us are going to have to be able to appreciate people who have styles and customs which seem strange to us. The educational system needs to teach people to appreciate diversity and to enjoy the challenges which come from fundamental difference.

The essential problem with today's schools is that they are homogeneous, bland and boring. Education, like life, should be exciting, surprising and fun. Real learning takes place as people have experiences which are unexpected. The real skill is to stretch students and to challenge them to do a little more than they feel capable of managing not only intellectually but in many other ways.

To the extent that education develops the new styles I have described above, it will prepare people to live in a radically changing world. It will get students to understand that change can be exciting rather than threatening. It will provide people with the skills to manage themselves through the rapids of change rather than being drowned in them. The task of the teacher is to stretch students without breaking them and to get them to grasp the thrill of living for personal growth and development rather than dull security.

In the short run, education for most people will still take place in schools and colleges. In the longer run, more and more education will move back into the community. We shall come to see all of life as a learning process. We shall see ourselves as living in a learning society.

Humanity cannot return to the simpler days when we ignored the broader world in which we lived. We were not responsible for evolution then. Now we are. Some critics argue that it is not realistic to educate people as though they could understand broader horizons. I am personally absolutely certain that the essential reason for so many of our failures with young people at the current time is that we underestimate their competence. They are far more capable than we give them credit for being. If we would only treat students as if they were twice as bright as we think they are, I know that half of our educational problems will vanish.

We really have no choice. The model which suggests that the world can be run by a small oligarchy is unrealistic. Either the vast majority of the people of the world learn how to manage their own affairs and be good citizens or the future is very bleak. Fortunately, there are no visible limits to how much people can learn if we provide them with the encouragement to be imaginative rather than require them to do what they are told.

The primary need is for each one of us to learn to balance ourselves in a world which will continue to surprise us. We shall always be knocked off center by events but we need to come back quickly. You may have seen the dolls which have weights in their base so they recover their upright stance when they are pushed to one side or the other. This is the balance model toward which we must strive throughout our lives. In order to be able to live in this way, knowledge will have to be structured in totally new forms.

New Knowledge Structures.

One primary requirement for human survival in the future is little discussed. Wisdom and knowledge must be available to decision-makers in a form which is usable and effective. The same material should be obtainable by citizens in ways which they can grasp as easily and effectively as possible.

One of the most common statements made today about human progress is that information doubles every three or five or seven years! The figure used depends on the method of calculation employed by the individual making the announcement. When I hear this statement I am likely to reply that while information may be doubling, there is ample evidence that knowledge is halving and wisdom is being even further reduced in the same time period.

The monopolization of knowledge, and its distortion, are two primary ways people maintain power. If they know something that other individuals and groups do not, they can run rings around them. If they can get their preferred statistics used, rather than those of another group, then they are far ahead of the game.

The way out of the problem we currently face which arises from competing statistics developed on different bases as well as deliberate information distortion, will not be found through a search for objective statistics. Objective statistics cannot be created because we live in a perceptual world. Statistics often hide as much as they reveal and I sympathize with the person who, in a fit of anger, announced that there were lies, damn lies and statistics! It is certainly true that figures are no longer sufficient by themselves to support critical decision-making.

Statistics were the key intellectual tool of the industrial era. They depend, above all, on sampling theory which assumes that it is possible to measure public opinion or industrial production by using data and figures from only a small number of people or firms. Sampling theory is based on one absolute necessity: there must be no systemic biases in choosing what elements of the total universe is sampled. Suppose one wants to measure the total yield of wheat in a field. One will not weigh each ear. Rather, one will choose ears from different parts of the field and this should include the areas of higher and lower production. Thus a good estimate of total production can be made.

Suppose, however, that one wants to measure the level of support for various political candidates. Suppose, in addition, that the poll is conducted by telephone. First, the percentage of support for a populist candidate may be far higher among those who do have telephones or who are not home to answer them. Second, those who support populist candidates may well be more afraid and unwilling to tell pollsters their views. Thus support figures may be heavily inaccurate. Several results of this type turned up in the more interesting, and controversial, Congressional races in 1990.

Sampling techniques necessarily break down when the world is diverse. Because the underlying shift away from the industrial era and toward the compassionate era is in terms of moving from uniformity and toward more and more differences, the difficulties with statistical techniques can only increase. I need to stress that the problem is not with particular statistics but with the very theory of sampling which is central to all modern statistical work.

The other problem with current information techniques is that they are still largely geared to a time when the world was largely stable. For example, students are taught using text books which are written as much as five or ten years before they are used. In today's conditions, the speed of change makes material written as little as a year ago obsolete. To grasp this, one has only to look at the change in world events over the last year and the obsolescence of any world affairs text book written before the break-up of the Communist Empire and the invasion of Kuwait.

Given the progressive breakdown of current information systems, there is an urgent need to develop a process which will provide an overview of all the primary issues of the day. These overviews would be produced at a variety of levels of difficulty and in all the available media. Teams would be set up to do this work and they would have the responsibility of stating what the various credible views on a particular topic were.

As I've spent some considerable time dealing with the nature of the education debate in this chapter, I'll stick with this issue. The group(s) dealing with it would listen to those on all sides. They would then state the arguments made by the proponents of the various positions. They would push and probe in order to discover the extent to which the positions advanced were coherent and consistent. They would then present the viewpoints to decision-makers and the public so that the validity of the various attitudes and proposals could be worked out in an intelligent and creative dialogue.

As I have already stated, there are two primary sides to the education debate. On the one hand, there are those who believe that we need to apply the logic of traditional schooling system strongly and consistently. On the other, many people argue that society should adopt broader educational goals and systems. Despite the fact that there usually are a couple of primary ways of stating an issue, it is critically important that any debate not be stated simplistically along just one continuum. Most people are not "tidy" thinkers. The real need is to provide a sense of the wide range of opinions that exist around the drug issue so that people will feel comfortable about surfacing their own ideas. A colleague of mine, Eugene Martin, has developed this technique to the level of an art form using audiotapes. I call this approach a problem/possibility (p/p) focuser .

There may seem, at first sight, to be a paradox in my supporting the idea of p/p focusers. After all, I have stated my views very clearly and I come down on one side of this issue. Why do I feel it appropriate for time to be spent on creating a balanced picture of various debates which are currently taking place within our culture? The fundamental reason is that I am prepared to believe that I am wrong. If my views are not supported by the evidence, then it is important that I change my position.

My commitment is to the truth and not to my own current view. I am personally delighted when I find somebody who can show me why my views are incorrect and enable me to gain a more accurate picture of reality. Anybody who takes this stance will inevitably support a p/p focuser approach. Those who are simply interested in manipulating people so they come to share their own opinion will disapprove of broadening the debate to look at all relevant views.

One of the key aspects of this approach—using a problem/possibility focuser—is to make sure that it is available at a number of levels and in various media. Problem/possibility focusers will, of course, be available on line through computers and also in print, video, audio and interactive formats. Another critical requirement is that the arguments in p/p focusers be kept constantly up to date. These documents cannot be written and forgotten. They must reflect the current state of the world.

The teams responsible for these documents must stay together and revise as rapidly as is necessary. P/p focusers also need to be written at various decisionmaking scales. The issues an individual needs to consider when thinking about their own opportunities for education are quite different from those which should be considered by those who have the opportunity to change educational systems.

There are two primary questions which have to be considered before we can be sure that the p/p focuser system of ordering knowledge will work. One of them is to decide on the most important questions which need to be considered by decision-makers and citizens. Fortunately this question does not have to be decided centrally. If this form of knowledge structuring becomes dominant, competing p/p focusers on the most important topics will be issued by various groups. Instead of colleges and universities being divided into disciplinary structures as they currently are, more and more of them will be set up in terms of the subject areas to which they pay attention.

The second question which has to be examined is what is a credible viewpoint which deserves to be included in a p/p focuser. Fortunately, this issue will also be resolved idiosyncratically by the many groups which are engaged in the production of p/p focusers. The logic of the p/p focuser approach, however, is to push forward to an ever-more inclusive vision.

The p/p focuser approach will help recreate the center in politics. Political decision-makers will gain the knowledge and support which will make it easier for them to stand for what is right rather than going along with the special interest groups which so often harass them. Once a p/p focuser which covers all the issues is available, it will be easier to place the ideas of a fringe group in perspective because their place in the total debate about a topic will be less compelling.

The very way our brains are structured makes it easier to cling to past thoughts rather than to accept new ones. The p/p focuser, and other similar techniques, is one of the best potentials we currently have for breaking through the patterns of the past and discussing the potentials of the future.

This brings us full circle. Geoffrey Vickers demanded that society commit itself to ensuring that accurate information be available. I am personally convinced that this will only happen after our educational and our political systems alter. Even more critically, nothing substantial can occur to improve the accuracy of information flows so long as current economic systems are maintained. Our current economic systems are largely responsible for our inability to achieve accurate movement of information.

This material is from* Turning the Century*, by Robert Theobald, 330 Morgan Street, New Orleans, LA 70114.

Robert Theobald, PhD, is an internationally known author, speaker and consultant, and has been working with fundamental change issues for over a quarter of a century. In addition to writing over fifteen books, he has spoken in 49 states and consulted widely for public, voluntary and private organizations wanting to create new directions.

Robert's recommendation of p/p focusers comes out of extensive experience with own particular p/p group, Action Linkage, with which he has had an extensive and highly successful organizational relationship for many years. A-L is still carrying on on a limited basis after over a decade of cooperative communication and what could be called responsive perspective explorations of a variety of change topics via letter exchanges. Your editor was a member of this group for a number of years.

Robert's book,* The Rapids of Change *($16.95), written with much cooperative input from members of Action Linkage, and* The Study Guide for the Rapids of Change *($19.95) can be purchased from The Lorax bookstore, 20 Elm St., Albany, NY 12202. The latter contains, among other things, two excellent "how-to" tapes offering a whole spectrum of suggestions for implementing changes within community.

ELEMENTS OF THE HOLISTIC EDUCATION VISION
by the Founding Members of the Global Alliance for Transforming Education (GATE)

Holism emphasizes the challenge of creating a sustainable, just and peaceful society in harmony with the Earth and its life. It involves an ecological sensitivity—a deep respect for the diversity of life forms and cultures on the planet.

Holism seeks to transform the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world by emphasizing our innate human potentials—the intuitive, emotional, imaginative, creative and spiritual, as well as the rational, logical and verbal.

Given this approach, how can education be restructured to better serve the children of the world?

Holistic education is not a particular curriculum, methodology or package of techniques; it is a set of working assumptions that include, but is not limited to:
Learning is an inner process of self-discovery and integration.

Learning is a collaborative, cooperative activity, respecting the unique contributions that every individual can make.

Human intelligence is a multi-faceted capacity whose vast potentials we are only beginning to understand.

Whole brain thinking involves high-order (contextual), intuitive and creative ways of knowing the world on many levels..

Learning is a life-long relationship with our natural social and spiritual environments; therefore all life situations may facilitate learning, and the idea of "schooling" needs to be expanded to recognize this.

Learning should be exciting, joyful, active, self-motivated, encouraging and supportive.

Education is fundamentally a dynamic, open human relationship. Teaching is a *calling* which aims to serve humanity.

Our present culture does not encompass all our possibilities; therefore education should be a dynamic process of growth.

Education should cultivate a critical awareness of the moral, social, technological and political context of learners' lives.

A holistic curriculum, whatever its particular content, must be interdisciplinary, with an integrated, global and ecological focus.

ARTICLES

TWO BY GATTO:

WE NEED LESS SCHOOL, NOT MORE
**[Families, Communities, Networks,
and the Proposed Enlargement of Schooling]**
by John Taylor Gatto
New York State Teacher of the Year, 1991

> ***"We were making the future," he said, "and hardly any of us troubled to think what future we were making. And here it is!"***
>
> ***—The Sleeper Awakes***

A surprising number of otherwise sensible people find it hard to see why the scope and reach of our formal schooling networks should not be increased—by extending the school day or year, for instance—in order to provide an economical solution to the problems posed by the decay of the American family. People who lean in this direction are all around right now. One reason for their preference, I think, is that they have trouble understanding the real difference between communities and networks, or even the difference between families and networks. Because of this confusion they conclude that replacing a bad network with a good one is the right way to go. Since I disagree so strongly with the fundamental premise that networks are workable substitutes for families, and because from anybody's point of view a lot more school is going to cost a lot more money, I thought I'd tell you why, from a schoolteacher's perspective, we shouldn't think more school but less.

People who admire our school institution usually admire networking in general and have an easy time seeing its positive side, but they overlook its negative aspect—that networks, even good ones, take the vitality from communities and families. They make solutions to human problems mechanical, "by the numbers", when a slow, organic process of self-awareness, self-discovery, and cooperation is what is required if any solution is to stick.

Think of the challenge of losing weight. It's possible to employ mechanical tricks to do this quickly, but I'm told that 95 percent of the poor souls who do are only fooling themselves, the weight lost this way doesn't stay off, it comes back in a short time. Other network solutions are just as temporary: think of a group of law students networking to pass their college exams, but preparing a brief in private practice is often a solitary, lonely thing, just as dealing with a burst appendix must be.

Aristotle saw, a long time ago, that fully participating in a complex range of human affairs was the only way to become fully human; in that he differed from Plato. What is gained from consulting a specialist and surrendering all judgment is often more than outweighed by a permanent loss of a piece of your volition. This discovery accounts for the curious texture of real communities, where people argue with their doctors, lawyers, and ministers, tell craftsmen what they want instead of accepting what they get, frequently make their own food from scratch instead of buying it in a restaurant or defrosting it, and perform many similar acts of participation. A real community is, of course, a collection of real families who themselves function in this participatory way.

Networks, however, don't need or want the whole person, but only a narrow piece of him; if you function in a network it asks you to suppress all the parts of yourself except the network-interest part—a highly unnatural act although one you can get used to doing it. In exchange the network will deliver efficiency in the pursuit of some limited aim. This will be seen to be a Devil's Bargain since on the promise of some future gain you must surrender your present total humanity. It will also be seen that if you enter into too many of these bargains you have split yourself into many specialized pieces, none of them completely human. And no time is available to reintegrate them. This, ironically, is the destiny of many successful networkers and doubtless generates much business for divorce courts and therapists of a variety of persuasions.

The fragmentation caused by excessive networking creates diminished humanity, a sense our lives are out of control, because they are. If we face the present school and community crisis squarely, with hope of finding a better way, we need to accept that schools—as networks—create a large part of the agony of modern life. We don't need more schooling, we need less.

I expect you'll want some proof of that even though the million or so people participating in education at home these days have begun to nibble at the edge of everybody's consciousness in recent years and promise to bite their way into national attention when details of just how impressive their success is get around a little more. So for those of you who haven't heard that you don't need officially certified teachers in officially certified schools to get a good education, let me try to expose some of the machinery that makes certified schooling so bad. And remember if you're thinking, "but it's always been that way"...that it really hasn't. Compulsory schooling in factory schools is a very recent, very Massachusetts-New York development. Remember, too, that until 30 odd years ago you could escape mass-schooling *after* school, hut that now it is much harder to escape because another form of mass schooling—Television—has spread all over the place to blot up any time spared by School. So what was merely grotesque in our form of national treatment of the young before 1960 has become tragic now that mass commercial entertainment, as addictive as any other hallucinogenic drug, has blocked the escape routes from mass schooling.

It is a fact generally ignored when considering the communal nature of institutional families like schools, large corporations, colleges, armies, hospitals and government agencies that they are not real communities at all, but networks. Unlike communities, networks—as I reminded you—have a very narrow way of allowing people to associate, and that way is always across a short spectrum of one, or at most a few, specific uniformities.

In spite of ritual moments like the Christmas Party or the office softball game, when individual human components in the network "go home," they go home alone. And in spite of humanitarian support from fellow workers that eases emergencies, when people in networks suffer they suffer alone unless they have a family or community to suffer with them.

Even with college dorm "communities," those most engaging and intimate simulations of community imaginable, who among us has not experienced an awful realization after graduation that we cannot remember our friends' names or faces very well? Or who, if he can remember, feels much desire to renew those associations?

It is a puzzling development, as yet poorly understood, that the "caring" in networks is in some important way feigned. Not maliciously, but in spite of any genuine emotional attractions that might be there, human behavior in network situations seems to become a dramatic act—a script produced to meet the demands of a story. And as such, the intimate moments in networks lack the sustaining value of their counterparts in community. Those of you who remember the wonderful closeness possible in army camp life or sports teams, and who have now forgotten those you were once close with, will understand what I mean. Have you ever forgotten an uncle or an aunt ?

If the loss of true community entailed by masquerading in networks is not noticed in time, a condition arises in the victim's spirit very much like the "trout starvation" that used to strike wilderness explorers whose diet was exclusively stream fish. While trout quell the pangs of hunger—and even taste good—the eater gradually starves for want of sufficient calories.

Networks like schools are not communities in the same way that school training is not education. By preempting 50 percent of the total time of the young, by locking young people up with young people exactly their own age, by ringing bells to start and stop work, by asking people to think about the same thing at the same time in the same way, by grading people the way we grade vegetables—and in a dozen other vile and stupid ways—network schools steal the vitality of communities and replace it with an ugly piece of mechanism. Nobody survives these places with his humanity intact, not kids, not teachers, not administrators, and not parents.

A community is a place that faces people at each other over time in all their human variety, good parts, bad parts, and all the rest. Such places promote the highest quality of life possible, lives of engagement and participation. This happens in unexpected ways but it never happens when you've spent more than a decade listening to other people *talk*, and trying to do what they tell you to do, trying to *please* them after the fashion of schools. It makes a real difference lifelong if you can avoid that training—or if it traps you.

Another instance might clarify this. Networks of urban reformers will convene to consider the problems of homeless vagrants, but a community will think of its vagrants as real people, not abstractions. "Ron," "Dave" or "Marty"—a community will call its bums by their names. It makes a difference.

People interact on thousands of invisible pathways in a community and the emotional payoff is correspondingly rich and complex. But networks can only manage a cartoon simulation of community and a very limited payoff.

I belong to some networks myself, of course, but the only ones I consider completely safe are the ones that reject their communitarian facade, acknowledge their limits, and concentrate solely on helping me do a specific and necessary task. But a vampire network like a school, which tears off huge chunks of time and energy needed for building community and family—and always asks for *more*— needs to have a stake driven through its heart and be nailed into its coffin. The feeding frenzy of formal schooling has already wounded us seriously in our ability to form families and communities by bleeding away time we need with our children and our children need with us. That's why I say we need less school, not more.

Who can deny that networks can get some jobs done? They do. But they lack any ability to nourish their members emotionally. The extreme *rationality* of networking at its core is based on the same misperception of human nature the French Enlightenment and Comte were guilty of. At our best we human beings are much, much grander things than rational, at our best we transcend rationality while incorporating its procedures on the lower levels of functioning. That is why computers will never replace people, computers are condemned to be rational, hence very limited. Networks divide people, first from themselves and then from each other, on the grounds that this is the efficient way to perform a task. It may well be, but it is a lousy way to feel good about being alive.

Networks make people lonely. They have no way to correct their inhuman functioning and still succeed as networks. Behind the anomaly that networks look like communities but are not lurks the grotesque secret of mass-schooling and the reason why enlarging the school domain will only aggravate dangerous conditions of social disintegration it is intended to correct.

I want to repeat this until you are sick of hearing it: Networks do great harm by appearing enough like real communities to create expectations that they can manage human social and psychological needs. The reality is they cannot. Even associations as inherently harmless as bridge clubs, chess clubs, amateur acting groups or groups of social activists will, if they maintain a pretense of whole friendship, ultimately produce that odd sensation familiar to all city dwellers of being lonely in the middle of a crowd. Who has not felt this sensation who frequently networks? Having many networks does not add up to having a community, no matter how many you have or how often your telephone rings.

With a network, what you get at the beginning is all you ever get. Networks don't get better or worse, their limited purpose keeps them pretty much the same all the time, there just isn't much development possible. The pathological state which eventually develops out of these constant repetitions of thin human contact is a feeling that your "friends" and "colleagues" don't really care about you beyond what you can do for them, that they have no curiosity about the way you manage your life, no curiosity about your hopes, fears, victories, defeats. The real truth is that the "friends" falsely mourned for their indifference were never friends, only fellow networkers, from whom in fairness little should be expected beyond attention to the common interest.

But such is our unquenchable need for community and the unlikeliness of obtaining it in a network, that we are in desperation of any better solution, driven to deceive ourselves about the nature of these liaisons. Whatever "caring" really means, we all understand instinctively that it means something more than simple companionship or even the comradeship of shared interests.

In the growth of human society, families came first, communities second, and only much later came the institutions set up by the community to serve it. Most institutional rhetoric—the proclaiming of what is important—borrows its values from individual families that work well together.

Particularly over the past century and a half in the United States spokesmen for institutional life have demanded a role above and beyond service to families and communities. They have sought to command and prescribe as kings used to do, though there is an important difference—in the case of ancient kings once beyond the range of their voices and trumpets you could usually do what you pleased, but in the case of modern institutions the reach of technology is everywhere—there is no escape if the place where you live and the family you live in cannot provide sanctuary.

Institutions, say their political philosophers, are better at creating marching orders for the human race than families are, therefore they should no longer be expected to follow but to lead. Institutional leaders have come to regard themselves as great synthetic Fathers to millions of synthetic Children, by which, I mean, to all of us. This theory sees us bound together in some abstract family relationship in which the State is the true Mother and Father, hence it insists on our first and best loyalty.

"Ask not," said President Kennedy, "what your country can do for you, but rather ask what you can do for your country." Since the "you" in question is both real and human, and the country you are alleged to possess one of the most extreme of verbal abstractions, it will readily be seen that the President's injunction is an expression of a synthetic family philosophy which regards "Nation" as possessing a claim superior to the claim of "Family." If you see nothing wrong with this, then it is probable you also believe that—with a little skillful tinkering—our schools will work just fine. But if you get a queer feeling at the image of yourself and family as appendages of an abstraction, then we are on the same wavelength. In the latter case, we are ready to consider that we may need less school, not more.

I want to examine the destructive effects the false claim of institutional prerogative has on both individual and family life, a destructiveness equally profound whether the claim comes from a government, a corporation, or from some other form of network.

If we return to our original discussion of networks it will be clear that every one of our national institutions is a place where men, women and children are isolated according to some limited aspect of their total humanity: by age, and a few other considerations in the case of compulsory schooling, by various other sorting mechanisms in other institutional arenas.

If performance in these limited roles is conceived to be the supreme measure of success, if, for instance, an "A" average is accounted the central purpose of adolescent life—the requirements for which take most of the time and attention of the aspirant—and the worth of the individual is reckoned by victory or defeat in this abstract pursuit, then a social machine has been constructed which, by attaching purpose and meaning to essentially meaningless and fantastic behavior, will certainly dehumanize the student, alienate him from his own human nature, and break the natural connection between him and his parents, to whom he would otherwise look for significant affirmations.

Welcome to the world of mass-schooling which sets this goal as its supreme achievement. Are you sure we want more of it?

As we approach the 21st century it is correct to say that the U.S. has become a nation of institutions where it used to be a nation of communities. Large cities have great difficulty supporting healthy community life, partly because of the constant coming and going of strangers, partly because of space constrictions, partly because of poisoned environments, but mostly because of the constant competition of institutions and networks for the custody of children and old people, and to monopolize the time of everyone else in between. By reserving young and old from the working life of places, and by reserving the working population from the lives of young and old, a fundamental disconnection of the generations has occurred. The griefs that arise from this have no synthetic remedy and no vibrant, satisfying communities can come into being where young and old are locked away.

Here and there mutilated versions of community struggle to survive, and in places where cultural homogeneity has been fiercely protected, as in Bensonhurst in Brooklyn or Polish Hill in Pittsburgh, something better than that—but in the main, "community" in cities and suburbs is a thin illusion, confined to simulations like street festivals. If you have moved from one neighborhood to another or from one suburb to another and have quickly forgotten the friends you left behind then you will have lived the phenomenon I refer to. Over 90 percent of the U.S. population now exists inside 50 urban aggregations. Having been concentrated there as the end product of fairly well understood historical processes, there they are denied a reciprocal part in any continuous, well articulated community. They are profoundly alienated from their own human interests. What else do you think the meaning is that only half our eligible citizens are registered to vote, and of that half, a bare 50 percent do vote? In two party jurisdictions a trifle over 1/8th of the citizenry is thus sufficient to elect public officials, assuming the vote splits 55-45. We've come a long way down the road to making optional what used to be regarded as duty, but that is what alienation from community life quickly accomplishes— indifference to almost everything.

When you are offered institutional simulations of community, when you are offered a steady diet of networks, involuntary like schools, or "voluntary" like isolated workplaces divorced from human variety, your basic human needs are placed in the gravest jeopardy, a danger magnified many times in the case of children. Institutional goals, however sane and well-intentioned, are unable to harmonize deeply with the uniqueness of individual human goals. No matter how good the individuals are who manage an institution, institutions lack a conscience because they measure by accounting methods. Institutions are not the sum total of their personnel, or even of their leadership, but are independent of both and will exist after management has been completely replaced. They are ideas come to life, ideas in whose service all employees are but servo-mechanisms. The deepest purposes of these gigantic networks is to regulate and make uniform. Since the logic of family and community is to give scope to variety around a central theme, whenever institutions make a major intervention into personal affairs they cause much damage. By displacing the direction of life from families and communities to institutions and networks we, in effect, anoint a machine our King.

Nearly a century ago a French sociologist wrote that every institution's unstated first goal is to survive and grow, not to undertake the mission it has nominally staked out for itself. Thus the first goal of government postal service is to provide protection for its employees and perhaps a modest status ladder for the more ambitious ones, its first goal is not to deliver the mail. The first goal of a permanent military organization is not to fight wars but to secure, in perpetuity, a fraction of the national wealth to distribute to its personnel. By this relentless logic an adoption agency requires babies to justify its continuing existence and under such a dynamic it will seek to obtain babies one way or another, whether they "need" adopting or not.

It was this hidden aspect of teaching the young *for pay*—that such teaching would inevitably expand to protect the interests of teachers, not students, that made Socrates condemn the Sophists so strongly long ago in ancient Greece. If these examples trouble you, think of the New York City public school system where I work, one of the largest business organizations on planet Earth. While the education administered by this abstract parent is ill-regarded by everybody, the institution's right to *compel* its clientele to accept such dubious service is still guaranteed by the police. And forces are gathering to expand its reach still further—in the face of every evidence it has been a disaster for all its history.

What gives the atmosphere of remote country towns and other national backwaters a peculiarly heady quality of fundamental difference is not simply a radical change of scenery from city or suburb, but the promise offered of near-freedom from institutional intervention into family life. Big Father doesn't watch over such places closely. Where his presence is felt most is still in the schools, which even there grind out their relentless message of anger, envy, competition, and caste-verification in the form of grades and "classes." But a home-life and community exist there as antidote to the poison.

This business we call "Education" when we mean "Schooling" makes an interesting example of network values in conflict with traditional community values. For 150 years institutional educators have seen fit to offer that the main purpose of an education is an economic one.

Good education = good job, good money, good things. This has become the universal national formula, flogged by Harvards as well as high schools. This prescription makes both parent and student easier to regulate and intimidate as long as the connection goes unchallenged either for veracity or in its philosophical truth. Interestingly enough, the American Federation of Teachers identifies one of its missions as persuading the business community to hire and promote on the basis of school grades so that the grades = money formula will become true by definition as it was made for medicine and law the same way after years of political lobbying. So far, common sense of businessmen has kept them hiring and promoting the old-fashioned way, using private judgment and performance as the preferred measures, but they may not resist much longer.

The absurdity of defining education as an economic good becomes clear if we ask ourselves what is gained by perceiving education as a way to enhance even further the runaway consumption that threatens the earth, the air, the water and the atmosphere of our planet. Should we continue to teach people that they can buy happiness in the face of a tidal wave of evidence that they cannot? Shall we ignore the evidence that drug addiction, alcoholism, teenage suicide, divorce and other despairs are pathologies of the prosperous much more than they are of the poor?

On this question of meanings we've hidden from ourselves for so long hangs both an understanding of the illness that is killing us and the cure we are searching for: What, after all this time, is the purpose of mass-schooling supposed to be? Reading, writing and arithmetic can't be the answer because properly approached those things take less than 100 hours to transmit—and we have abundant evidence that each is readily self-taught in the right setting and time.

What are we doing then locking these kids up in an involuntary network with strangers for 12 years? Surely not so a few of them can get rich! Even if it worked that way, and I doubt that it does, why wouldn't any sane community look on such an education as positively wrong, because it divides and classifies people, demanding that they compulsively compete with each other and publicly labels the losers by de-grading them literally, identifying them as "low-class" material? The bottom line for the winners is that they can buy more stuff! I don't believe that anyone who thinks about it feels comfortable with such a silly conclusion. I can't help feeling that if we could only answer the question of what it is exactly that we want from these kids we lock up, that we would suddenly see where we took a wrong turn, how we're going about getting what we want the wrong way. At that point I have enough faith in American imagination and resourcefulness to believe we'd come up with a better way—in fact, a whole supermarket of better ways.

One thing I do know, most of us who've had a taste of loving families, even a little taste, want our kids to be part of one. One other thing I know is that eventually you have to come to be part of a place, part of its hills and streets and waters and people—or you will live a very, very sorry life as an exile forever. Discovering meaning for yourself, and discovering satisfying purpose for yourself is a big part of what education is. How this can be done by locking children away from the world is beyond me.

An important difference between communities and institutions is that communities have natural limits, they stop growing or they die. There's a good reason for that: In the best communities everyone is a special person who sooner or later impinges on everyone else's consciousness. The effects of this constant attention makes all, rich or poor, feel important because the only way importance is perceived is by having other folks pay attention to you. You can buy attention, of course, but it's not the same thing. Pseudo-community life, where you live around others without noticing them, and where you are constantly being menaced in some way by strangers you find offensive, is exactly the opposite. In pseudo-community life you are anonymous for the most part, and you want to be because of various dangers other people may represent if they notice your existence. Almost the only way you can get attention in a pseudo-community is to buy it because the prevailing atmosphere is one of indifference. A pseudo-community is just a different kind of network—its friendships and loyalties are transient, its problems are universally considered to be someone else's problems (someone else who should be paid to solve them); its young and old are largely regarded as annoyances, and the most common shared dream is to get out to a better place—to "trade up" endlessly.

Unlike true communities, pseudo-communities and other comprehensive networks like schools expand indefinitely just as long as they can get away with it. "More" may not be "better" but more is always more profitable for the people who make a living out of networking. That is what is happening today behind the cry to expand schooling even further, a great many people are going to make a great deal of money if growth can be continued.

Unlike the intricate, sometimes unfathomable satisfactions of community and family life, networks always present their successes as mathematical displays of one-upmanship: "How many "A's?" How much weight lost?" "How many inquiries generated?" Competition is their lifeblood and the precision suggested by the numerical ranking of performance is their preferred style.

The quality-competition of businesses, when it happens, is generally a good thing for customers, it keeps everyone on his toes doing his best. The competition inside an institution like a school isn't the same thing at all. What is competed for in a school is the favor of a teacher and that can be won or lost by too many subjective parameters to count; it is always a little arbitrary and sometimes a lot more pernicious than that. It gives rise to envy, dissatisfaction, and a belief in magic. Teachers, too, must compete for the favor of administrators arbitrarily dispensed, carrying with it the promise of good or bad classes, good or bad rooms, access to tools or denial, and other hostages to obedience, deference, and subordination. The culture of schools only coheres in response to a web of material rewards and punishments: "A"s, "F"s, bathroom passes, gold stars, "good" classes, access to a photocopy machine—everything we know about why people drive themselves to know things and do their best is contradicted inside these places.

Truth itself is another important dividing line between communities and networks. If you don't keep your word in a community everyone finds out and you have a major problem thereafter. But lying for personal advantage is the operational standard in all large institutions, it is considered part of the game in schools. Parents, for the most part, are always lied to or told half-truths; parents for the most part are considered adversaries, at least that's been true in every school I ever worked in. Only the most foolish employees don't have recourse to lying since the penalties for being caught hardly exist—and the rewards for success can be considerable. Whistle-blowing against institutional malpractice is always a good way to get canned or relentlessly persecuted. Whistle-blowers never get promoted in any institution because, having served a public interest once, they may well do it again.

The Cathedral of Rheims is the best symbol I know of what a community can do and why we lose a lot when we don't know the difference between these human miracles and the social machinery we call networks. Rheims was built without power tools by people working day and night for 100 years. Everybody worked willingly, nobody was slave labor. No school taught cathedral building as a subject.

What possessed people to work together for a hundred years? Whatever it was looks like something worth educating ourselves about. We know the workers were profoundly united as families of friends, and as friends they knew what they really wanted in the way of a church. Popes and archbishops had nothing to do with it; Gothic architecture itself was invented out of sheer aspiration, the Gothic cathedral stands like a lighthouse illuminating what is possible in the way of uncoerced human union. It provides a benchmark against which our own lives can be measured.

At Rheims, the serfs and farmers and peasants filled gigantic spaces with the most incredible stained glass windows in the world but they never bothered to sign even one of them. Neither Harvard nor anybody else knows who designed them or made them because our modern form of institutional boasting did not yet exist as a corruption of communitarian feeling. After all these centuries they still announce what being human really means.

Communities are collections of families and friends who find major meaning in extending the family association to a band of honorary brothers and sisters, they are complex relationships of mutual job and obligation which generalize to others beyond the perimeter of the homestead.

When the integration of life that comes from being part of a family in a community is unattainable, the only alternative, apart from accepting a life in isolation, is to search for an artificial integration into one of the many expressions of network currently available. It's a bad trade and we should begin thinking about school reform by stopping these places from functioning like cysts, impenetrable, insular bodies that take our money, our children, and our time and give nothing back.

Artificial integration that controls human associations—think of those college dorms or fraternities— appears strong but is actually quite weak; seems close-knit but in reality its bonds are loose; suggests durability but is usually transient. And it is most often badly adjusted to what people need although it masquerades as being exactly what they need. Welcome to the world of school. Do we really want more of it? I don't.

In recent years I've given much thought to the problem of turning the compulsory school network into some kind of emotionally rewarding community because a move seems to be afoot to do the reverse, to enlarge substantially the bite that schooling takes out of a young person's family time, community time, and private time. Trial balloons are floated constantly about this in the press and on TV, that means that some important groups are preparing to extend the reach of compulsory schooling in the face of its genuinely ghastly record. My Jewish friends would call that *chutzpa* but I take it as an index of just how confident these people are that they can pull it off.

Schools, I hear it argued, would make better sense and be better value as 9-5 operations or even 9-9 ones, working year-round. We're not a farming community any more, I hear, that we need to give kids time off to tend the crops. This New World Order Schooling would serve dinner, provide evening recreation, offer therapy, medical attention, and a whole range of other services which would convert the institution into a true synthetic family for children—better than the original one for many poor kids, it is said, and this will level the playing field for the sons and daughters of weak families.

Yet it appears to me as a schoolteacher that schools are already a major cause of weak families and weak communities.

They separate parents and children from vital interaction with each other and from true curiosity about each other's lives. Schools stifle family originality by appropriating the critical time needed for any sound idea of family to develop—then they blame the family for its failure to be a family. It's like a malicious person lifting a photograph from the developing chemicals too early, then pronouncing the photographer incompetent.

A Massachusetts Senator said a while ago that his state had a better literacy rate before it adopted compulsory schooling than after. It's certainly an idea worth considering whether or not schools didn't reach the limits of their possible efficiency long ago, and that "more" for schools will make things worse, instead of better.

Whatever an education is, it should make you a unique individual, not a conformist; it should furnish you with an original spirit with which to tackle the big challenges; it should allow you to find values that will be your road map through life; it should make you spiritually rich, a person who loves wherever he is, whoever he is with, whatever he is doing; it should teach you what is important, how to live and how to die.

What's gotten in the way of education in the United States is a theory of social engineering that says there is ONE RIGHT WAY to proceed with growing up. That's an Egyptian idea symbolized by the pyramid with an eye on top that's on the other side of George Washington on our one-dollar bill. Everyone a stone defined by his position in the pyramid. This theory has been presented in many different ways but at bottom it signals the world view of minds obsessed with the control of other minds, obsessed by dominance and strategies of intervention to maintain that dominance.

It might have worked for ancient Egypt but it certainly hasn't worked very well for us. Indeed, nothing in the historical record provides evidence that any one idea should dominate the developmental time of all the young, and yet aspirants to monopolize this time have never been closer to winning the prize. The humming of the great hive society foreseen by Francis Bacon and by H. G. Wells in *The Sleeper Awakes* has never sounded louder than it does to us right now.

The heart of a defense for the cherished American ideals of privacy, of a man's home being his castle, of variety and individuality lies in the way we bring up our young. CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE. Put the kid in a class and he will live out his life in an invisible cage, isolated from his chance at community; interrupt the kid with bells and horns all the time and he will learn that nothing is important; force him to plead for the natural right to go to the toilet and he will become a liar and a toady, ridicule him and he will retreat from human association, shame him and he will find a hundred ways to get even.

The habits taught in large scale organizations like schools are deadly. Think for a minute, by definition individuality, family, and community are expressions of singular organization, never of one-right-way thinking on the grand scale. Private time is absolutely essential if a private identity is going to develop, and private time is equally essential to the development of a code of private values—without which we aren't really individuals at all. Children and families need some relief from government surveillance and intimidation if original expressions belonging to them are to develop. Without these freedom has no meaning.

The lesson of my teaching life is that the structure and theory of mass-education is fatally flawed, it cannot work to support the democratic logic of our national idea because it is unfaithful to the democratic principle. Ours is still the best idea for a nation there is, even though we aren't living up to it right now.

Mass-education cannot work to produce a fair society because its daily practice is practice in rigged competition, suppression and intimidation. The schools we've allowed to happen can't work to teach non-material values, the values which give meaning to everyone's life, rich or poor, because the structure of schooling is held together by a Byzantine tapestry of reward and threat, of carrots and sticks. Those things have no connection with education—working for official favor, grades, or other trinkets of subordination, that is—they are the paraphernalia of servitude, not freedom.

Mass-schooling damages children. We don't need any more of it. And under the disguise that it is the same thing as education, it has been picking our pockets just as Socrates predicted it would thousands of years ago. One of the surest ways to recognize education is that it doesn't cost very much, it doesn't depend on expensive toys or gadgets; the experiences that produce it and the self awareness that propels it are nearly free, in fact. You can see it is hard to turn a dollar on education although schooling is a wonderful hustle, getting better every day:

Sixty-five years ago Bertrand Russell, the greatest mathematician of this century, its greatest philosopher, and a close relation of the King of England to boot, saw that mass-schooling in the United States had a radically anti-democratic intent, that it was a scheme to artificially deliver national unity by eliminating human variation, and by eliminating the forge that produces variation: the Family. According to Lord Russell, mass-schooling produced a recognizably American student: anti-intellectual, superstitious, lacking self confidence—with less of what Russell called "inner freedom" than in the citizens of any other nation he knew of, past or present. These schooled children become citizens, he said, with a thin "mass character", holding excellence and aesthetics equally in contempt, inadequate to the personal crises of their lives. He wrote that in 1926.

American national unity has always been the central problem of American life, that was inherent in our synthetic beginnings and in the conquest of a continental land mass. It was true in 1790 and it is just as true, perhaps even truer, 200 years later. Somewhere around the time of the Civil War we began to try shortcuts to get the unity we wanted faster, by artificial means. Compulsory schooling was one of those shortcuts, perhaps the most important one. "Take hold of the children!" said John Cotton back in colonial Boston and that seemed such a good idea, eventually the people who looked at "Unity" almost as if it were a religious idea did that. It took 30 years to beat down an opposition which was fierce, but by the 1880s it had come to pass—"they" had the children. For the last 110 years, the one-right-way crowd has been trying to figure out what to do with the children and they still don't know. Time to try something different.

"Good fences make good neighbors," said Robert Frost. The natural solution to learning to live together in a community is first to learn to live apart as individuals and as families. Only when you feel good about yourself can you feel good about others. But we attacked the problem mechanically, as though we could force an engineering solution by crowding the various families and communities under the broad, homogenizing umbrella of institutions like compulsory schools. In working this scheme the democratic ideas that were the only justification for our national experiment were betrayed. The attempt at a shortcut continues, and it ruins families and communities now just as it always did then. Rebuild these things and young people will begin to educate themselves—with our help—just as they did at the nation's beginning. They don't have anything to work for now except money and that's never been a first-class motivator, as our Vietnam War experience should have taught us. Break up these institutional schools, decertify teaching, let anyone who has a mind to teach bid for customers, privatize this whole business—trust the free market system. I know it's easier to say than to do, but what other choice do we have? We need less school, not more.

It is characteristic of John Taylor Gatto that he consciously chose to take the opportunity of the public spotlight upon him as New York State's Teacher of the Year for 1991 to deliver a passionate denunciation of the soul-destroying effects of public education upon his children that he had been living with as a Manhattan middle school teacher. This article is an equally passionate address which appears in his book, **Dumbing Us Down**, ***a review of which appears below, on page 365.***

To me, John Taylor Gatto is one of the genuine heroes of our time: brilliant, generous to a fault, eloquent, passionate, engaged—a real fighter for the truth with a heart of gold and a silver tongue. A modern Don Quixote, tilting at the windmills of the educational establishment, or any institution that kills the souls of children. Truly, his heart is pure. At the mere whiff of gunpowder, he will jump on his great white horse (or ancient station wagon), lance poised for assault. His eloquence is so poignantly honed, polished and focused on accomplishing its end that he leaves the rest of us awestricken. May he live forever!

Big John Giving 'Em Hell in Carnegie Hall

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LITERARY OUTBURST:

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility,
He learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame,
He learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness,
He learns justice.
If a child lives with security,
He learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval,
He learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
He learns to find love in the world.

—DOROTHY LAW NOLTE

This is one of the speeches John gave in Carnegie Hall in November, 1991. He uses unforgettably truthful facts and metaphors to illuminate the burning issue of the destruction of children's souls in our public schools of which others like Jonathan Kozol and Nat Hentoff have also spoken. Can we face this central shame of our democracy—that we are driving our children crazy? This is John's central life mission.

"HOW DID WE EVER COME TO BELIEVE THAT THE STATE SHOULD TELL OUR CHILDREN WHAT TO THINK?"

by John Taylor Gatto

Keep in mind as I speak that I spent 26 years in public school classrooms. My perspective is that of an insider, not an outsider. You have been warned.

We live in a time of great school crisis, and that crisis is linked to a greater social crisis in the general community. We seem to have lost our identity. Children and old people are locked away from the business of the world to a degree without precedent - nobody talks to them anymore. Without children and old people mixing in daily life, a community has no future and no past, only a continuous present.

We live in networks, not communities. Everyone I know is lonely because of that. In some strange way school is a major actor in this tragedy, just as it is a major actor in the widening gulf among races and social classes. Using school as a sorting mechanism, we appear to be on the way to creating a caste system, complete with untouchables who wander through subway trains begging, and sleep upon the streets.

I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my 27 years of teaching: schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes any more that scientists are made in science classes, or politicians in civics classes, or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders. This is a great mystery because thousands of humane, caring people work in schools as teachers and aides, and even as administrators. But the abstract logic of the institution overwhelms their individual contributions. Although teachers do care, and do work very hard, the institution is psychopathic—by which I mean it has no conscience.

It rings a bell and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell where he memorizes that man and monkeys derive from a common ancestor, or that a man named Columbus discovered America even though millions of people were already here.

The idea that schooling and education are the same thing was never a convincing one, but in our lifetimes, yours and mine, it has become an exhausted one.

How did we ever come to believe that the State should tell our children what to think?

To escape the trap we are in will require acts of courage and imagination: the first an act of political resolve—to deconstruct the kind of schooling we have and return it to real people and real communities from abstract government hands; the second, to create a vision of *what* can be done and how to do it. My own job tonight will be to question the legitimacy of the school monopoly. In the hours we are together, you'll hear six separate logics of schooling, as different from each other as they are from the logic of government factory schools where I spend my own working life.

If you had a choice where to send your own kid you might well choose one of these six ideas, yet still be grateful you *knew* about the other five, even if they were not the right way for you. But the secret strength in this simple program design is that they do *not* represent all the worthwhile kinds of schooling. Many more exist concealed from view by the government monopoly and its press agents. These are unique, one-of-a-kind places you'll hear from tonight—their existence proving there is no 'one right way' to grow up.

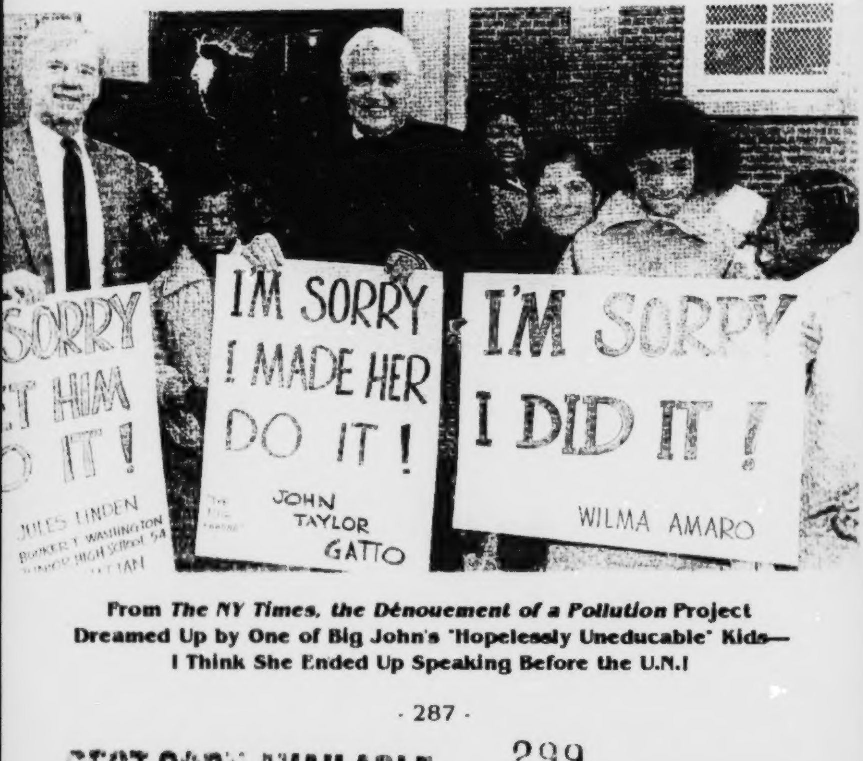
How on earth did we ever accept the idea a government had the right to tell us where to go to school? How did we ever come to believe the State should tell our children what to think?

Our form of compulsion schooling is an invention of the State of Massachusetts, 140 years ago. It was resisted, sometimes with guns, by an estimated 80 percent of the Massachusetts population. A senator's office contended not too long ago that prior to compulsory government schooling the literacy rate in Massachusetts was 98 percent, but after it the figure never again reached above 91 percent.

I don't think we'll get rid of schools anytime soon, certainly not in my lifetime, but if we're going to change what has become a disaster we need to recognize that ignorance is inherent in the design of the thing. It is not the fault of bad teachers, or of too little money spent. Structurally, schools fly in the face of how children learn.

Take reading. People learn to read naturally and easily somewhere between the ages of 5 and 12, some earlier, some later. Late readers are indistinguishable from early readers in a

John Gatto Ignoring the 'Tabula Rasa' Theory of Learning


SORRY
ET HIM
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JULES LINDEN
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
JUNIOR HIGH School 54
TTAN
I'M SORRY
I MADE HER
DO IT!
JOHN
TAYLOR
GATTO
I'M SORRY
I DID IT!
WILMA AMARO

From *The NY Times, the Dénouement of a Pollution* Project Dreamed Up by One of Big John's 'Hopelessly Uneducable' Kids— I Think She Ended Up Speaking Before the U.N.!

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very short time. But the natural course of things can be violently altered by rewarding early readers—and by pronouncing later read-ers 'in need of remediation'. The lie is then compounded by supplying the deficient with 'special' treatment, including assignment to a separate junk category called 'special education'. You cannot 'teach' children to read any more than you can 'teach' them to walk and talk. Under the right conditions they teach themselves with great facility.

But you can teach children to hate reading, to do it poorly, and to hate themselves for not measuring up to the false premises of institutional reading practice—premises which provide the foundation for our multi-billion dollar reading industry. The reading racket, in particular, has marked the burgeoning home school movement for legal sanctions because the presence of nearly a million children who've taught themselves to read, soundly and happily, creates a clear and present danger to the 'whole world' crowd and to the 'phonics' crowd alike. Bad for business.

Schools as we know them haven't been around very long. They don't have deep roots. That's one thing in our favor as we think about uprooting them. Schools as we have them were designed at the time of the American Civil War to be instruments for the scientific management of a mass population, the cheap labor immigration was providing to factory and farm. Schools are intended to produce through the application of formulae, formulaic human beings whose behavior can be predicted and controlled.

To a very great extent schools succeed in doing this. But in a nation increasingly disintegrated and demoralized, in a national order where the only successful people are independent, self-reliant, confident, and individualistic, the products of schooling are irrelevant. Well-schooled people are irrelevant. They can sell film and razor blades, push paper and talk on telephones, make deals or sit mindlessly before a flickering computer terminal, but they hate to be alone with themselves. As human beings they are useless.

I spoke in southern Illinois last week. During my talk a young man about 25 years old stood up in the back of the room and said in a tormented voice, 'I'm 25 years old and have two college degrees. I don't know how to do anything. I don't know how to do anything at all. If the fan belt of my car broke in a snowstorm out in the country I'd freeze to death reciting the goddam Pythagorean theorem.'

Much daily misery around us is caused by the fact our schools force children to grow up absurd. Any reform in schooling must deal with its absurdities: it is absurd and antilife to be part of a system that compels you to sit in confinement with people exactly the same age and social class. That system effectively cuts you off from information you need to be sane, and cuts you off from your own past and future. It seals you into a continuous present much the same way television does. It is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system compelling you to listen to a stranger read poetry when you ache to learn to construct buildings; it is absurd and anti-life to sit with a stranger discussing the construction of buildings when the rush of language inside you makes you want to write a poem.

It is absurd and anti-life to move from cell to cell at the sound of a buzzer, every day of your natural youth, in an institution that allows you no private time or space.

What parent would allow such a horror to be inflicted if their own schooling had left them with the power to understand? "What about 'basics'?" you say. If you are willing to face the truth you would see that only talking is basic to the society we've made. We are a land of talkers now. We pay talkers most and admire talkers most—and so our children talk constantly, following public models of television, radio, and schoolteachers. It is very difficult to get children to take 'basics' seriously these days—especially in the social environment of schools—because they really *aren't* basic to the world we've forced on the children. None of us stays silent long enough to figure out what the new basics really are.

Two institutions control our children's lives—television and schooling, probably in that order. Both reduce the real world to a never-ending, nonstop abstraction. For most of history until recently, the time of a child would be occupied in real work, real charity, real adventures, real apprenticeships, and the realistic search for mentors who might teach what you really needed to learn. What *that* is is, of course, different for each of us.

A great deal of time was spent in community pursuits, practicing affection, negotiating, and studying every level of the society around you firsthand. Also in learning how to make a home, a living, and dozens of other tasks necessary to become a whole man or woman. *There was a continuity and a comprehensiveness to life.* It was not fragmented into subjects and specialties to provide work for professionals, nor was it arranged into sequences that made no sense. The kind of education history reveals was administered most often by people you *knew*—not by total strangers arranged into a priesthood called 'teachers'.

In the new world order that was arranged for us after the Civil War the calculus was changed. Scientific positivism, as it used to be called, wanted the calculus changed and Horace Mann and Freder-ick Taylor were nothing if they were not religiously Positivist. Today the tabulation of hours in a young life reads like this: My children watch television 55 hours a week according to recent reports, and they sleep 56. That leaves them 57 hours in which to grow up strong and competent and whole. But my children attend school 30 hours more, spend 8 hours preparing for school, and in goings and comings, and an additional 7 hours a week in something called 'home'-work—although this is really more schoolwork except in 'Newspeak'. After the 45 school hours are removed a total of 12 hours remain each week from which to fashion a private person—one that can like, trust, and live with itself. Twelve hours. But my kids must eat, too, and that takes some time. Not much, because they've lost the tradition of family dining—how they learn to eat in school is best called 'feeding'—but if we allot just 3 hours a week to evening feedings, we arrive at a net total of private time for each child of 9 hours.

It's not enough. It's not enough, is it? The richer the kid the less TV he watches, of course, but the rich kid's time is just as narrowly proscribed by his inevitable assignments to private lessons from more hired strangers, seldom in areas of his own actual choice.

This demented schedule is an efficient way to create dependent human beings, needy people unable to fill their own hours, unable to initiate lines of meaning to give substance and pleasure to their existence. It is a national disease, this dependency and aimlessness, and schooling and television and busy work - the total Chautauqua package—has a lot to do with it.

Think of the things killing us as a nation: narcotic drugs, brainless competition, dishonesty, greed, recreational sex, the pornography of violence, gambling, alcohol, and the worst pornography of all—lives devoted to buying things, accumulation as a philosophy—all of these are addictions of dependent personalities. That is what our brand of schooling must inevitably produce. A large fraction of our total economy has grown up around providing service and counseling to inadequate people - and inadequate people are the main product of government compulsion schools.

I want to tell you what the effect is on children of taking the time they need to grow up and forcing them to spend it on abstractions. No reform that brainlessly defines our national problem as reading, writing, and arithmetic will be anything more than a coward's evasion of the nightmare we've inflicted on our children.

The children I teach are indifferent to the adult world. This defies the experience of thousands of years. Nobody wants to grow up these days because assuming responsibility takes practice, but schooltime precludes practice.

The children I teach have almost no curiosity. What they do have is transitory, they cannot even concentrate long on jobs they assign themselves. Can you see a possible connection between bells ringing again and again to change classes and this phenomenon of evanescent attention? When everything you do is interrupted before it's finished, why should you care about anything?

The children I teach have a poor sense of the future, of how tomorrow is linked to today. The exact moment they are in is the boundary of their consciousness. That was the dream of a 19th century Frenchman named Auguste Comte, and before he died in the insane asylum at Charenton his ideas had a profound impact on Horace Mann and the American schoolroom, and on Frederic Taylor and the American workplace.

The children I teach have no sense of the past and how it predestinated the present, how it limits their choices, how it shapes their lives and values. A long line of Western thinkers, all of them childless men like Comte, have understood that breaking a child's ties with the past cracks him away from his own family. And separating parents and children has been the goal of childless male philosophers since Plato wrote about its value in *The Republic*. Without strong family ties, he said, children are easier subjects for central planning. Augustine knew that, and Erasmus, and Bacon, and Descartes, and Hobbes, and Rousseau—and all the other childless men who helped to architect the government schooling we have today.

The children I teach are cruel to each other; they lack compassion for misfortune, they laugh at weakness, they have contempt for people whose need for help shows too plainly.

The children I teach are uneasy with intimacy, solitude, or unguarded speech. They cannot deal with genuine intimacy because of a lifelong habit of preserving a secret inner self beneath their public school personalities, personalities which must remain open at all times, as a prostitute's body is open to the constant inspection and ranking of strangers. Our children's public personalities are kept constantly under surveillance by authorities in an orgy of voyeurism. The outer persona of the children I teach is fabricated from artificial bits and pieces of behavior borrowed from television, or acquired by studying the preferences of schoolteachers. The real self is too small and vulnerable to bear longtime exposure, because it has had no privacy in which to develop strength and integrity. Since exposure is required in intimate relationships, these must be avoided. My children are not who they pretend to be. Most of them aren't anybody at all, thanks to school. It's frightening.

The children I teach are strikingly materialistic, following the lead of schoolteachers who materialistically 'grade' everything, and television mentors who offer everything in the world for sale.

The children I teach are dependent, passive, timid in the presence of new challenges. This timidity is often masked by surface bravado, by the exuberance of youth, by anger or aggressiveness, but underneath the bluster is emptiness, mirroring the great vacuum, the black hole of government schooling which draws in vast energies, but emits little.

I could name other conditions school reform must tackle, but by now you will have grasped my thesis. Schools and television *cause* these pathologies. It's a simple matter of arithmetic. Between schooling and television all the time children have to become adults is eaten up. That is what has destroyed the American family; it is no longer a factor in the education of its own young, it no longer has access to its own children.

Tonight's program is one of choices, choices for parents, choices for young people, choices for communities. Where did we ever get the crazy idea that government had the right to tell us how our own kids should grow up?

Where did we ever get the grotesque idea that the State has a right to educate our kids? Where did we ever get the notion there is only one right way to grow up instead of hundreds? How did we lose our way and come to believe that human value and human quality can be reduced to numbers derived from paper/pencil tests?

TWO ON JOHN DEWEY:

THE STILL LIVING MESSAGE OF JOHN DEWEY

by William H. Leue, PhD.

Can a man born in 1859, the year in which Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was published, and who became involved in educational experiments and started writing on educational theory before the turn of the century, still have anything significant to tell us who are interested in experimental and alternative educational projects in today's very troubled world? Since he lived and wrote all the way into the fifties of our own century and stirred up discussions and controversy which have not yet subsided, or which seem to rise up from the apparent ashes again and again, I don't think he can as yet be relegated entirely to history.

Wherein, however, lies his peculiar relevance? It is true that he wrote on standard pedagogical topics, such as methods, subject-matter areas, administration and so on, and some of his disciples probably overemphasized some of his detailed ideas. But Dewey himself always downplayed the independent consideration of any of these areas, insisting that their problems must remain subordinate to larger considerations. Perhaps the disrepute into which Dewey has fallen in many quarters arises mostly from the forgetting or misunderstanding of what he had to say in these larger matters.

Dewey was not merely a pedagogical theorist nor merely a "philosopher of education," but a philosopher in the largest sense of the word, not excluding such traditional citadels of the discipline of philosophy as epistemology and metaphysics, and it is my contention that some of the ideas he had in these areas, if they can be expressed on a level of common understanding, may still be of value to us in our present situation.

From at least as early as the major statement of his educational theory, *Democracy and Education*, published in 1915, he already put the central issues of education into a very much larger setting, the nature and functioning of society in general, and in subsequent writings he went on to ground his educational ideas in psychology and natural science, culminating in a general "process philosophy" in which all these perspectives come together.

At the beginning of *Democracy and Education* he argues that "democracy" is not merely a name for a particular form of government or social organization, but designates a pattern of communal life in which there is a full and free interaction of all the individuals involved. The core of fully expressed and developed educational process is intimately involved with the fulfillment of the democratic ideal in society. Dewey is acutely aware of the fact that there are many survivals of older, less democratic forms in our society which are reflected in similarly undemocratic patterns in our educational theories and practices. Much of the detailed discussion in this book is devoted to uncovering and dealing with these archaic, anti-democratic survivals.

Dewey does not confuse democracy with anarchy, nor education with "deschooling." Though in simple societies children can learn to become fully functioning adults primarily through symbolic play and direct participation in adult activities, in our more complex patterns of life, much abstract and general information must be transmitted to them through some form of "schooling," he believes. But the best way of doing this, he says, is through two-way rather than one-way communication, through active group participation, through dealing with people and things, not merely words and ideas. Dewey holds that many factors, both individual and group, are essential for real education to occur—opportunity and encouragement of initiative, exploration and reflection for the individual as well as feedback, give and take and review from the group.

In details Dewey's pictures of school procedures still look like the most enlightened aspects of a few actual open and enlightened schools—most of them private—which genuinely understood and adopted his recommendations. It is to be regretted that his concepts were allowed to be misinterpreted, both by those who wanted to keep children under more rigid control and by those who wanted to indulge them, with the unfortunate result that Dewey's entire educational philosophy has come to be publicly branded by the now quite generally discredited label, "progressive education."

Critics who do not accuse Dewey of anarchial confusion in his educational theories often accuse him of excessive "collectivism." Answering this charge involves going further into his psychological theories. The key word here for Dewey is "experience," which in the beginning of *Experience and Nature* he describes, in the first edition, as a "double-barreled word," and, in the second edition, as a "weasel word." His principal point is that there are two interacting poles in its meaning which he sometimes lists as "doing" and "undergoing." On the one side, experiencing, he says, is an active process, a reaching out and grasping of things—a meaning related to experimenting. This is the objective pole. On the other side, experiencing, is taking something in, perceiving, absorbing. This is the internal, subjective pole. Under this aspect or pole of experiencing there is adequate room for individuality, and it is this aspect of his psychology which these critics have overlooked. But Dewey's point is that both poles are essential to real experience. It is clear that our subjective process would not be deep or rich if it did not arise out of interaction with real other people and a real environment external to ourselves, but such a fact does not warrant the charge of "collectivism."

Pushing the notion of experience further, Dewey sees it as an interactive process coming in ever closer contact with "nature"—the process in the world beyond ourselves—so that finally we get a view of reality as a general, interactive, evolving, creative process, with what we call "human experience" riding the crest of the wave of this natural process of creative interaction. Enriched and approached from various angles, this is Dewey's basic metaphysical insight.

From this perspective, the educational activities that go on in those few small independent and alternative schools to which I referred above can be looked at not merely as some odd, quiet, hidden backwater diversion from the mainstream of American education but a bright spark riding the crest of cosmic creativity, pointing the way for individual and societal fulfillment.

WILLIAM H. LEUE is an emeritus professor of philosophy at the State University of New York at Albany, a student of John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead and William James, all of whom were deeply interested in education. "Progressive education" owes its inspiration to the work and influence of John Dewey, a movement which has been all but forgotten in recent years or reduced to a few "lesson plans" used by teachers in the public schools on some subject chosen by her as a focus for a "teaching unit." But as it was originally conceived by Dewey it is gone—into the discard pile right underneath the more recent and equally misused and discredited "open classroom" movement, which also owes so great, albeit largely unacknowledged, a debt to Dewey's earlier insights and recommendations at the beginning of the progressive education movement. In fact, I have occasionally wondered whether some of the leaders of the open classroom movement might not have been influenced by their own childhood experiences in elementary schools where Dewey's ideas were still operating successfully. Ed.

WOULD DEWEY MAKE CHILDREN LEARN IN SCHOOL?

by Charlotte N. Landvoigt

Despite an injunction to avoid personal recollections in this paper, I have a need to begin with one. The topic of this paper reminds me of the first time I was introduced to the work of John Dewey. I was in a "Foundations of Philosophy" course taught by Chris Eisele After reading *Experience and Education* and participating in lengthy class discussions, an unanswered question remained: "If a group of children was studying the Phoenicians and one child wanted to paint a picture in the back of the room, would that child be forced to join the group?"

To answer the question, I read more Dewey. The resulting paper, "Dewey's Esthetics as Experience in Education," was presented in 1980 at the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society.[1] It seems that, after ten years, I have come full circle. In the intervening years, I have co-founded a school—giving me an opportunity to observe, from a Deweyian perspective, children learning alone and in groups. The school is entering its tenth year this year and has undoubtedly influenced both what I get from, and take to, reading Dewey.

Back to the question posed at the outset, would Dewey make children learn in school? The answer is quite clearly "no" since Dewey believed it impossible to "make" children learn. However, to better understand Dewey's grounds for saying no, we must first understand the terms of the question. One of the best places to find a thorough discussion of making children learn is in Dewey's work, *Interest and Effort in Education*..[2]

According to Dewey, two camps have formed in education: those who believe that children should be made to learn through force of will—in other words, that children should be forced to sit at a task until they master it; and those who believe that children should be made to learn through the teacher creating appealing materials and surroundings (the Sesame Street approach) where facts and ideas are sugar coated for easier consumption. Dewey thought that both of these approaches shared the same fundamental misconception. As Dewey reflected,

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[1] Eisele, J.C. and Landvoigt, C.N., "Dewey's Esthetics as Experience in Education," Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society, 1980.

[2] Dewey, John, *Interest and Effort in Education* , in Jo Ann Boydston (ed.), *The Middle Works, 1899-1924* , Vol. 7, 1912-1914, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979).

> The common assumption is that of the externality of the object, idea, or end to be mastered to the self Because the object of end is assumed to be outside the self it has to be *made* interesting; to be surrounded with artificial stimuli and with fictitious inducements to attention. Or, because the object lies outside self, the sheer power of 'will,' the putting forth of effort without interest, has to be appealed to. The genuine principle of interest is the principle of recognized identity of the fact to be learned or the action proposed with the growing self; that it lies in the direction of the agent's own growth, and is therefore, imperiously demanded, if the agent is to be himself. Let this condition of identification once be secured, and we have neither to appeal to sheer strength of will, nor to occupy ourselves with making things interesting.[3]

Thus, in Dewey's view, the use of the term "make" in conjunction with learning is nonsensical. "Making" a child do something assumes an external activity unrelated to the growth of the child. Learning cannot be forced from outside and attempts to do so are counterproductive. Dewey is explicit in his warnings about what will happen if we attempt to "make" children learn apart from their own interests.

> Externally, we have mechanical habits with no mental end or value Internally, we have random energy or mind-wandering, a sequence of ideas with no end at all, because they are not brought to a focus in action.[4]

The divided child—one whose outward behavior is forced or enticed to conform to the school's expectations while his or her internal self is unrelated to school activity—is a sad result of efforts of make children learn. Such children are denied the opportunity to develop habits of self-discipline and the increase in powers of execution which result from the development of their own interests. Instead of interacting with the environment through meaningful activities, children spend energy denying their interests and acquiescing to the will of another. This energy is wasted because such children are not developing their own wills and powers; their ability to follow their own purposes, realistically interacting with the environment and using increasingly appropriate means to achieve their ends sustains no growth at all.

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[3] Ibid , p. 156.

[4] Ibid., p. 159.

Although vehemently condemning the concept, Dewey recognized the difficulty in changing the commonly held view that children must be made to learn. He felt that those who believe that children must be forced to do what they are told regardless of their own interests would not be easily dissuaded from that belief. Nor would those who believe that children are born bad and must be civilized through long training be easily discouraged from putting their ideas into practice. For, how could children become disciplined adults, capable of earning a living at routine jobs or completing difficult, long-term tasks without the early experience of being made to learn?

Dewey's rejoinder to these ideas in "Why Have Progressive Schools?" is instructive.

> The strong moralistic bias that colors these views seems to make it impossible for their holders to see that in giving meaning, in his own daily life, to the work a child does, there is actually a gain in the disciplinary value of the work, rather than a loss. There is gain because the work is immediately valuable and satisfactory to the child. Therefore his best effort goes into it and his critical powers and initiative are exercised and developed. Moral and intellectual powers increase in vigor when the force of the worker's spontaneous interest and desire to accomplish something are behind them. This is as true of children as of adults.[5]

Another factor leading to the mistaken idea that children should be made to learn in school is a lack of understanding of the child's process of development. Dewey felt that adults tend to forget the necessity of slow growth and push children to learn things before they are ready As he reflected in *Schools of Tomorrow*,

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[5] Dewey, John, "Why Have Progressive Schools?", in Jo Ann Boydston (ed.), *The Later Works, 1925-1953* , Vol. 9, 1933-1934 (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), p. 155.

> We are continually uneasy about the things we adults know, and are afraid the child will never learn them unless they are drilled into him by instruction before he has any intellectual or practical use for them.[6]

The self-doubts of adults which lead to rushing the learning process of the child can be dangerous however.

> Maturity is the result of the slow growth of powers. Ripening takes time; it cannot be hurried without harm. The very meaning of childhood is that it is the time of growth, of developing. To despise the powers and needs of childhood, in behalf of the attainments of adult life, is therefore suicidal.[7]

Dewey condemned schools which encourage rapid development in the child at the expense of relaxed time for thought, immediate handling of new materials, or trial and error experimentation. He wrote in *Democracy and Education* that,

> Even the kindergarten and Montessori techniques are so anxious to get at intellectual distinctions, without 'waste of time,' that they tend to ignore - or reduce - the immediate crude handling of the familiar material of experience, and to introduce pupils at once to material which expresses the intellectual distinctions which adults have made.[8]

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[6] Dewey, John, *Schools of Tomorrow*, in Jo Ann Boydston (ed), *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*. Vol. 8, 1915, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 213.

[7] Ibid., pp. 213-214.

[8] Dewey, John, *Democracy and Education*, in Jo Ann Boydston, (ed.), The Middle Works, 1899-1924, Vol. 9, 1916, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), p. 160.

The way to avoid the problems inherent in attempts to make children learn is to build upon the genuine interests of each child. Dewey's emphasis on the role of the teacher as observer grows out of this necessity. Each child's self-initiated activity holds the key to further development of powers of growth. Since each child is a unique individual, the teacher must first get to know the child through his or her activity. Interest based activities are those in which the child engages "in a whole-hearted way." A unique self having needs, habits, and powers directed toward the activity, as well as materials and conditions upon which the activity takes place are the two necessary factors. As Dewey wrote,

> Wherever there is genuine interest, there is an identification of these two things. The person acting finds his own well-being bound up with the development of an object to its own issue.[9]

The process of building on children's interests in schools requires the presence of committed and capable teachers. Although Dewey placed great value on the teacher's part in interacting with children's activities in an educative way, he did not view the teacher or the school as the entities commonly found in most schooling today. In "Dewey Outlines Utopian Schools," he envisioned a future in which schools and teachers, as we know them, are obsolete.[10] In Dewey's Utopia, centers would be created where people of all ages could come together to carry on various types of activity. The spacious "assembly places" would have workshops, museums, laboratories, libraries, greenhouses, gardens and orchards, and home-like buildings. The community buildings would not be large (holding no more than 200) so that close personal interactions between participants would be possible.[11] Without classes or arbitrary divisions, children would gradually develop their interests with the help of others in the community. In a manner resembling apprenticeships, children would first watch older people's activities, then, as they demonstrated greater skill and responsibility, take a larger part in their chosen activities.[12]

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[9] Dewey, John, *Interest and Effort in Education*, MW 7, p. 183.

[10] Dewey, John, "Dewey Outlines Utopian Schools," in Jo Ann Boydston, (ed.) *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, Vol. 9, 1933-1934, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989).

[11] Ibid., p. 136.

At Dewey's centers, there would be no purposes or objectives, no teachers or pupils or lessons - only the "process of a developing life." The concept of making sure that children learn reading and writing skills and acquire subject matter in such areas as geography, arithmetic, and history was considered silly by Dewey's Utopians. Upon Dewey's repeated questioning, he reported that,

> they asked whether it was true that in our day we had to have schools and teachers and examinations to make sure that babies learned to walk and to talk.[13]

In Dewey's Utopia, the concept of making children learn in schools would be replaced by children learning naturally in an active, supportive environment .The resulting adults would possess a sense of their own positive power, developed through the elimination of conditions which lead to feelings of fear, embarrassment, constraint, self-consciousness, failure, and incapacity.[14]

However, despite his depiction of Utopia, Dewey was a pragmatist. He was well aware that in existing society children spend a great deal of their time in schools. Therefore, he encouraged new and experimental school environments while making recommendations for the improvement of traditional schools. Some of Dewey's recommendations include the following.

1) The school environment should encourage children to find their own real life activities, and should include opportunities for concrete observation and experimentation. The adults in the school environment should not attempt to prematurely call into play the child's powers or try to make children specialize their powers before they are developmentally ready.

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[12] Ibid., p. 137.

[13] Ibid., p. 138.

[14] Ibid., p. 140.

2) Freedom of physical mobility should be part of the school environment and opportunities should be provided for children to use material things to satisfy their needs. The school environment should include materials and conditions under which the materials can be used, without attempting to motivate children in a particular direction. Once children are engaged in a creative activity, adults can help them acquire standards to evaluate that work; however, teachers must primarily attempt to keep the creative attitude alive, not focus on perfecting the product of creative activity. Adult guidance should take the form of providing materials with which the child can interact, developing increasingly difficult lines of action, rather than overly emphasizing children's undesirable behaviors.

3) The school environment should include children in a society where moral choices can be made and their consequences reflected upon, and where children can take responsibility for concrete, real life situations. Teachers should help children understand and use their emotions in dealing with the social and physical environment, as well as providing an atmosphere of positive regard.[15]

As can be seen by the foregoing recommendations, Dewey sought to encourage schools and teachers to change the attitude of making children learn into an attitude of accepting and working with the child's developing powers.

CONCLUSION

Modern schools developed to serve the purpose of dealing with the diversity and complexity of life which arose with the industrial revolution. Prior to that, direct experience in the community provided most of the activities needed to educate children. As our society moves further into the post-industrial era, with an explosion of information gathering and processing, to rely on the concept of making children learn becomes increasingly counter-productive. There is no longer an acceptable body of information, which even assuming the possibility of programming children to make them learn it, can be counted on to be needed by the children when they reach adulthood. There is however, a process by which children do learn to develop their powers and habits - a process which they will continue to use throughout their lives. Learning based on genuine interest has the double advantage of being meaningful in the present as well as the future. Dewey has given us the framework to understand the process, it is up to us to develop the environments and interactive skills to help - not make children learn.

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[15] Landvoigt, Charlotte N., *John Dewey's Concept of the Child,* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1986), pp. 275-339.

Candy Landvoigt (with her husband Steve) is the co-founder of The Highland School in Highland, West Virginia. This article—for which we are immensely grateful—is a copy of a paper Candy gave at a meeting of the American Education Studies Association in Orlando, Florida. She and Steve are members of a small group of school leaders or former school leaders—within and without the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools—who have consciously designed their schools on the basis of practicing as well as advocating total self-direc-tion/governance in their schools and in their lives.

TWO BY GENE:

ARE WE MYTH-TAKEN ABOUT EDUCATION?
by Gene Lehman, editor of *LUNO*

In a column printed in *the Oregonian* (1/28/86), William Raspberry extends the public discussion of education by bringing out the futility of trying to reform our educational system before we arrive at any consensus on the goals or purposes of education.

Our school systems have traditionally operated on the assumption that there was a common, unifying purpose in spite of all the conflicting statements of educationists, politicians and thinkers.

Do schools exist for the good of the individual or for the good of the state? Should we blindly follow the resolution, 'What's good for schools is good for everyone?'

By its title, the prestigious study *A Nation at Risk* makes the good of the individual secondary. Just as government exists for the good of the people, don't schools exist for the good of students (who may or may not attend), the good of the parents (who deserve a break) and the general prosperity of the taxpaying public?

As educators analyze the learning process, as they recognize more and more differences in personal learning styles, the less consensus there is on the best way to get to wherever they are supposed to be going.

Raspberry, like most commentators who are products of an educational system that has programmed them to consider education as synonymous with a school system, does not get to the basic question: 'Just what is education?'

It is currently fashionable to relate education to thinking. Some would challenge students to think mathematically or scientifically. Some would challenge them to think logically or syllogistically, some to think pluralistically or humanistically, some abstractly or philosophically, some pragmatically or employabilitically, some artistically or creatively, some theologically or Biblically.

Programs to promote thinking may pose such futuristic considerations as what to do in a nuclear confrontation. How many teachers dare challenge students to think about the most important, the most immediate question: 'What am I doing sitting here in this classroom when I would be happier, perhaps even learning more, some place else?' And if students are free to think and discuss such immediately pertinent questions, should they not also be free to make such a practical application as walking out?

The pervasive belief that school is the best place to learn is followed by an attitude that there is no point in learning unless getting credits, grades or some official recognition.

James Fallows in 'The Case Against Credentialism' (Atlantic, Dec. '85) finds that the one business where the measure of performance rather than a list of credentials seems to rule is sports. Sports seems to be the only area where participants are always expected to do their best and can always be replaced when someone better is available.

Competitive sports uniquely succeeds in getting everyone to expect that players set unlimited personal and team goals and embrace the training for maximum personal and team development.

On the academic side, schools seem to get hung up on minimum competencies and very limited, measurable goals. Then they try to inflict these uninspiring restrictions onto the sports program, even though most school systems cling for dear life to the coattails of sports.

Although educators are very aware of the limitations, the distortions and the unreliability of any test, school systems seem more and more compelled to adopt universally uniform, mandatory testing programs. The most serious result of such testing is that test scores become the goal of learning. Rather than the end, test scores should be considered as the beginning of learning. Tests should be an evaluation tool to help determine where we are. Rather than limiting our vision, tests should free us to move beyond narrow measurements of potential.

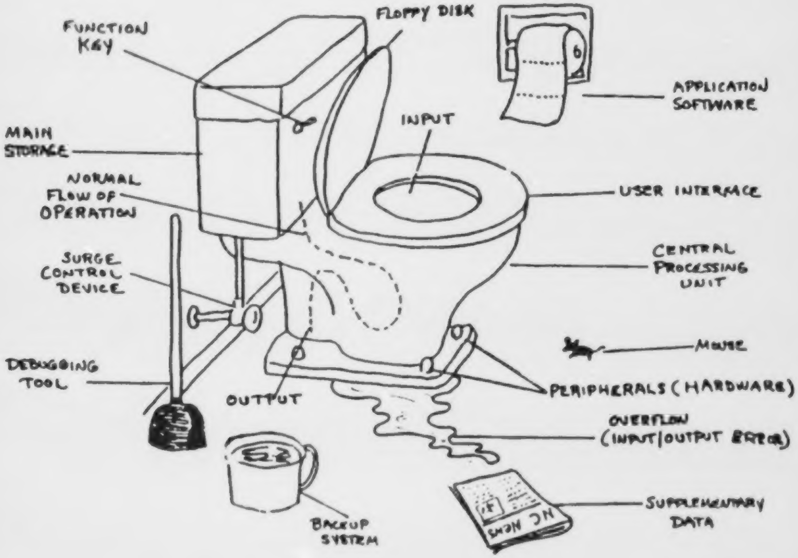
Most educators would probably not object to defining education as 'The development of one's personal potential to the maximum,' but then they would almost (always interrupt the process in actual practice.

History is filled with inspiring examples of people who reached great heights by refusing to accept personal limitations and by challenging all institutional controls. We have countless examples from art, entertainment, technology and business that the most spectacular developments can quickly become institutionalized into deadening, copycat routines.

As long as we consider school systems as synonymous with education, we will never be free to explore the mysteries of learning. As long as we rely on schools or other institutions to resolve the problems that can only be camouflaged by institutionalization, we will never be free to learn.

—Gene Lehman 2/1/86

Understanding the Technology


FUNCTION KEY
FLOPPY DISK
APPLICATION SOFTWARE
MAIN STORAGE
INPUT
NORMAL FLOW OF OPERATION
USER INTERFACE
SURGE CONTROL DEVICE
CENTRAL PROCESSING UNIT
MOUSE
DEBUGGING TOOL
OUTPUT
PERIPHERALS (HARDWARE)
OVERFLOW (INPUT/OUTPUT ERROR)
SUPPLEMENTARY DATA
NC NEWS
BACKUP SYSTEM

CHALLENGING THE GREAT CHAIN OF EDUCATION

by Gene Lehman

"First link in the **CHAIN**," the lead headline of the *Gresham* (Oregon) *Outlook* Vista '90 series on education (March 3), is very suggestive. If kindergarten is the first link in the **CHAIN**, what is the last link? Is it the 12th grade, or does the **CHAIN** continue on through other institutions? Does one ever break completely free from the **CHAIN** that binds at such an early age?

If a **CHAIN** is no stronger than its weakest link, could it be that the further the **CHAIN** is extended, the harder it is to maintain high quality? Though one of our most popular national pastimes is blaming schools for all the ills of society, the real problem may not be that schools are failing but that they are trying to do too much and succeeding too well .

Students in kindergarten now must learn about alcohol and drugs and how to resist sex molesters. As family and community life breaks down and the school system takes the responsibility of teaching students about sex, drugs, disease and proper behavior, "teachers more and more are becoming secondary, and in some cases primary, sources of parental guidance."

According to the superintendent of the Reynolds district, Hudson Lasher, teachers are handling this role very well. "I don't know anybody else in society who can do a better job of doing it than schools do."

Teachers play a major role in helping students develop the belief in themselves, the self-esteem so many seem to lack. Without self-esteem, "kids are easy prey to alcohol and drugs, a life of crime," says Lasher. But as teachers take over more parental responsibility, what happens to the self-esteem of parents? Is school success helping to undermine family life and family values?

Third-grade teacher Sandi Ludi thinks there's a "lack of respect for adults," and that it is growing each year. Fourth-grade teacher Marvelle Cop says, "More and more is expected of the teachers . Less is expected of the home."

Although students are taught to resist peer pressure, sixth-grade teacher Tim McDaniel says "Peer pressure is king at the middle school." Eighth-grade teacher Jim Tompkins, after 20 years at East Orient School, says, "Nowadays the kids don't know where their parents are. Or they know where they are and they can't get to them."

Gresham High School teacher Sandi Long says, "Education now is almost socialization of the student . We are not primarily just educators." With all the problems facing today's teachers and students, Long likes the challenge and says, "I really think teachers are doing a good job and students are doing a good job learning."

Within the confines of our school system, teachers and students are actually doing remarkably well. Many very capable, sensitive, dedicated teachers and many high-achieving students are challenging **CHAIN** control as they strive to do what works best for them.

Many parents are taking primary responsibility for educating their children, demanding more choice, teaching their children at home. The biggest problem is finding ways for all concerned with quality education to work together in a positive, constructive, rather than in a negative, confrontational way.

As the education **CHAIN** is challenged from within and without by responsible, creative people and by hard economic realities, **NETWORKS**, aided by all the latest communication technology, are breaking through barriers to make the best education people and resources easily accessible to all.

EX-CHAIN-GING COMMAND

Throughout the world, in traditional institutions ranging from government and military to business, religion and education, the **CHAIN OF COMMAND** is breaking up at the top, breaking down at the bottom and breaking out in the middle.

When those at the top of a **CHAIN** lose moral authority, personal power and their sense of direction, those at the bottom become more and more desperate, hopeless and unmanageable; they lose respect for authority, law, morality, civility, community, family and themselves, as they degenerate into hopeless apathy or strike out in violent, random acts of rage.

Those in the middle of a **CHAIN**, often a majority, may struggle valiantly to preserve an orderly process, but when the mental strain and physical cost become unbearable, they break out in many directions, ranging from narrowly self-serving to fractiously futile or cooperatively constructive.

Many **CHAINS** are old and rusty with some very weak links. Many are overextended, stretched to the breaking point. Most **CHAINS** lack the flexibility to operate efficiently in a competitive situation; they develop an insensitive bureaucracy that frustrates creativity and discourages high productivity.

As those in control of a **CHAIN** feel threatened, they almost instinctively fall back on force, both physical and psychological, to maintain their power and privileged position. The use of increased force to strengthen control often results in strains that set the stage for an explosive disintegration.

CHAINS rely heavily on government protection through regulations, laws, courts, police, military and detention to keep their subjects in line, but their most critical task is to control information and education.

CHAINS profit from a government school system that forces attendance at the earliest possible age, demands public support, and regulates curriculum, procedures, personnel and facilities and controls alternative programs through a variety of bureaucratic regulations and the harsh economic reality of having to compete with a government system which has such a financial monopoly.

While the education **CHAIN** is basic to all other **CHAINS**, especially in instilling a submissive dependence on those in authority, it is beset with multiple contradictions. It promotes freedom while depending on government control; it promotes a pluralistic philosophy but still tries to control the matter and manner of education; it professes to provide equality of education but in actual practice is very discriminatory; it offers "free" education but has made the cost so prohibitive that the entire financial structure is breaking down.

CHAINS operate effectively by maintaining a narrow focus. The education **CHAIN** is strongly pulled in a narrow direction by those who see its primary role as serving the interests of the state, but pulled in diverse directions by those who think schools should be subject to the needs of students, family and community, that education should provide the widest possible personal challenge.

There is a high-tech battle between those in control of **CHAINS** and those who are determined to challenge authority and tradition. While **CHAIN** commanders try to reduce everything and everyone to neatly manageable numbers, adventuresome hackers and rebellious technocrats find computerized **CHAINS** very vulnerable to penetration and discombobulation.

CHAINS become victims of their own success as they generate conflicting ideas and produce individuals who understand the **COMMAND** structure but yearn for the freedom of unrestricted personal development and association.

Reprinted from LUNO: Learning Unlimited Network of Oregon, by Gene Lehman, 31960 SE Chin St., Boring, OR. 97009.

Gene Lehman is an indefatigable lover of life and people who seems to enjoy equally teaching and playing with words. Among his

other personal qualities is an open-hearted generosity in sharing the products of his outer and inner preoccupations and concerns. Do contact him through LUNO. I guarantee that he will respond! His words of Gene-ius (see? it's catching!) appear fairly regularly in ΣΚΟΛΗ, because what he has to say is always so clear and so relevant. You might say, his comments hit the issues right on the chin. Never boring or looney, despite his sign-off ID.

THE DIFFICULTY OF BUILDING COALITIONS IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION:

Lessons From *Holistic Education Review*

by Ron Miller, Ph.D.

In March, 1988, the first issue of ***Holistic Education Review*** came off the press. Five thousand copies were distributed to educators at public and alternative schools, to college professors, parents and other citizens interested in education. ***HER*** sought to bring together, in one professional publication, the various educational movements and methods that develop the "whole person"—and it attempted to address the social and political issues which these movements entailed. This was a promising and fertile area which no other publication adequately covered, and we thought that ***HER*** would spearhead a new movement to unify the many "alternative" approaches in education.

Now, two years later, it is quite evident that this movement is off to a very slow beginning. Even as public education has come under more intense criticism and the concept of "schools of choice" has gained credibility, the issues addressed in the pages of ***HER*** have failed to generate significant interest or discussion. The articles in ***HER*** have only rarely been cited in any segment of the educational press—scholarly, professional or alternative, and more importantly, educators who are already "holistic"—Montessori and Waldorf people, progressive and humanistic educators, alternative and home schoolers—have consistently declined to respond to ***HER***'s appeals for dialogue and cooperation among their various groups. In this article I want to explore the issue behind ***HER***'s uncompleted mission.

Information overload

Probably the simplest, and most benign, explanation for the lack of response is that educators are very busy people! Adults who work daily with young people are preoccupied, and usually quite exhausted, by their demanding work. I know this from personal experience: I started my career as a Montessori teacher and felt it necessary to leave teaching in order to give adequate attention to my more philosophical, scholarly interests.

But even when teachers are interested in philosophical reading (what conventional education calls "professional development"), there is an incredible profusion of information circulating out there today. It is my full-time job to stay on top of the literature in alternative and humanistic education, and even I am overwhelmed by its sheer quantity as well as its diversity! From Whole Language to critical pedagogy to the threefold social order to unschooling to developmentally appropriate curriculum, there is an astounding amount of thinking and publishing happening in this field. I like to think of ***HER*** as the single most concise, comprehensive digest of all this information, but even so, there is a lot of competition!

Maybe people perceive the ***Review*** as just another magazine, rather than realizing it is the only educational journal which brings these many perspectives together. If that's the case, we need to present ***HER*** more as an antidote to information overload, rather than a contributing factor.

However, leaving aside the unavoidable problem of information overload, my experience with the ***Review*** has revealed a number of issues, which I think are quite serious, that are preventing alternative education from becoming a unified, effective movement.

Personal vs. Social Change

One basic issue is a conflict between those who view alternative education as a personal (or family) endeavor, and those who see it as a social movement. I first became aware of this conflict while pursuing my doctoral research, when I found that some educators, while genuinely holistic in their approach, were content to accommodate themselves to their society and its values, while others were more*radical*. This conflict was a major issue for the progressive education movement; it came to a head when George S. Counts charged that many of his colleagues were child-centered romantics and dared them, instead, to be truly progressive. (*Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* 1932). This conflict has popped up recently in NCACS, in the debate over whether the Coalition is becoming too "political."

In one sense, this conflict results from a difference in personal temperament or style. Some people do not want to fight against society and its institutions, but want to live their own lives in peace; others thrive on politics and controversy. There must be room for both styles in an alternative movement. Each approach has something to offer, because to achieve the ideal world that we'd all like to live in, we will need to nurture each other quietly, one at a time, and also to raise hard questions about the culture that puts so many obstacles in our way. Not everyone is comfortable doing both things, so we need both kinds of people in our movement.

But there is a serious problem when these personal styles become congealed into ideological positions. The personal change side in its extreme takes the form of flaky New Age idealism or back-to-the-land survivalism, while the social change side becomes an angry, intolerant, leftist crusade. Neither of these hardened positions will bring about a genuine, humane transformation of education, family life or our culture. If the quiet, perhaps spiritually oriented personal change people and the activist, political, social change people cannot even talk with each other and learn from each other, then our movement is lost; this is precisely what is keeping the Green movement, which is so promising, from getting off the ground in the U.S.

Personally, I believe the alternative education movement needs to be radical rather than accommodating; I think educational problems are, at root, cultural and social problems. However, the challenge is to be radical in a humane, spiritual way—not to be angry left-wing enemies of society. I believe that this balanced perspective in the ***Review*** keeps our circulation down, because extremists on both sides are not satisfied.

Group Loyalty

I have a favorite saying which calms me whenever I get confused by the overwhelming diversity of social and educational movements: "There already is every point of view in the world." In other words, no matter what idea or ideology we might cook up to explain or reform the world, someone has already thought of it, and there is probably already a movement dedicated to bringing it about. To carry this point further, it means that there is no single right way; there is no monopoly on Truth, but a wide array of paths that each give one perspective on it, one piece of it.

This is the underlying premise of ***Holistic Education Review***. We believe that "free school" people—followers of John Holt, A.S. Neill, etc.—have valuable things to say, while Montessori people and Waldorf people and Deweyan progressive people and learning style researchers and global educators also have valuable things to say. The Truth, whatever it ultimately turns out to be, must be a composite of all these valuable teachings—it cannot be the one method or the one attitude that any one group holds to distinguish itself from the others.

Unfortunately, I have found that a large number of alternative educators, perhaps a large majority, hold fast to their own group's methods, definitions and ways of thinking. There is almost no sharing between groups, almost no cross-fertilization of thinking. ***HER*** has been spectacularly unsuccessful in its efforts to encourage dialogue; readers don't even write short letters in response to our articles. It appears that most alternative educators are quite satisfied to remain steadfastly loyal to the one method and one movement they affiliate with. I believe this is a significant fault.

If the alternative school movement is ever going to have a significant effect on education in this country, it is going to have to become a unified coalition of humanistic, progressive, global, ecological, holistic educators. Otherwise it is no more than a disjointed bunch of cults. But this issue is related to the personal vs. social change issue; people who are not interested in "having a significant effect on education" will not be motivated to join with potential allies—they don't need them. Perhaps not, but I would like to point out that they are missing golden opportunities to enrich their understanding and practice. Whether or not we adopt their entire systems, people like Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and other educational pioneers have offered profound insights into human development and the educational process. Any of us can learn from them, and can clarify our own thinking even in arguing with their ideas.

Hyper-Independence

Alternative educators are independent folks—that's why they're alternative in the first place. They do not accept the role of content, obedient citizen/employee/consumer which this culture expects us to fill. Thank God for the alternative movements; I seriously believe that, despite the Bill of Rights and our other trappings of democracy, this country would slide into fascism without the continued rebelliousness of people like alternative educators. We need more of them!

But independence taken too far leads into a sort of libertarian atomism—"You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone." This is a fine antidote to social homogenization, but it is hardly the basis for a humane community. Unfortunately, I have come across this jealous individualism all too often in alternative education movements. Even people who agree with each other are suspicious of joining together, lest their cherished independence be threatened. For example, this has had an adverse effect on efforts to organize a national home schooling movement. Now, I totally support home schooling as a positive educational choice—in fact, even with all my interest in various innovative types of schools, I may eventually choose to home school my own son. I also recognize that most home schoolers are sociable people who do not mean to isolate themselves or their children. Nevertheless, from what I have seen, I feel the need to encourage home schoolers—and all alternative educators—to balance their strong desire for independence with what the anarchist Kropotkin called 'mutual aid.' We are all in this together, and we do need each other's help.

This jealous individualism can be a real barrier to our success in alternative education. It is really unhelpful for us to be highly defensive of our beliefs and practices, feeling them threatened from every quarter. It contributes to the intense group loyalty I described above. Many are suspicious of organizations, but desperately need them. I don't think this is a healthy situation. I think we all need to cultivate a greater openness to allied points of view rather than be personally threatened by them. We need to be less egoistically *invested* in our ideologies and our movements. Our primary concern should be the unfolding lives of the children in our care; we should see our work as serving new life, new truths, new paths—rather than as a way of validating our own beliefs. We do need to defend the new life that emerges from within our children and ourselves against the repressions of this culture—but this is not the same as defensiveness.

So What?

It is not the purpose of this article to inspire every reader, after finishing it, to race to their checkbooks to send me $16 for a subscription to the ***Review***—though that would be nice. It is also not my purpose to suggest that alternative movements should discard all their different approaches and join my "holistic education" movement. The last thing we need is yet another movement. Besides, there is no one holistic approach: if you are nurturing the development of the whole person, no matter what style or methods you use, you are already a holistic educator.

But I think the points I've raised are important nonetheless. ***HER*** has not had much of an impact on mainstream educational thinking, and I think a major reason for this is the fragmented nature of the alternative school movement. One of ***HER***'s founding purposes was to be a voice for alternative education, a bridge between humanistic/progressive educators and the entrenched education establishment. As long as the alternative voices are scattered and at odds with each other, the mainstream does not need to take us seriously. Public education has enough problems without having to deal with a contentious, defensive, ragtag band of rebels! Instead of presenting a comprehensive alternative philosophy that draws on the strengths of Montessori, of Waldorf, of Dewey, of free schoolers and unschoolers—instead of a comprehensive and coherent philosophy, an interested mainstream educator will find a cacophony of voices, each claiming to have The Answer to the problems of education. ***HER*** has tried to present a coherent philosophy, but this looks rather silly if no one contributes to the dialogue that must support it.

The stakes are high. Education is going to have to change to meet the radically different needs of the post-industrial age. But will the new education serve the needs of multinational Corporations or the needs of human development? The answer is a foregone conclusion—unless we add our united voice to the debate.

Ron Miller, editor of Holistic Education Review, had an article on the history of alternative education in America in one of the early issues of ΣΚΟΛΕ, and is a long-time supporter of alternative education. It is to be hoped that he does not give up on alternative educators, as John Holt did!

MOVING FROM 'LOGIC' TO BRAIN COMPATIBILITY

by Leslie A. Hart

Yogi Berra, of baseball fame, is reputed to have sagely remarked that 'you can observe a lot just by looking.'

True. Watch some outfielders. As the ball is hit, they estimate where it will come down, and run to that spot or stand still, as called for. Unless the wind is playing tricks, they position themselves with astonishing accuracy. No two balls follow the same path, and the curve is complete yet the skilled player knows in an instant where it will fall. Somehow his brain effortlessly makes the calculations.

If they were learning outfielding in schools, they would be taught to estimate the velocity in MPH, the angle of elevation in degrees, and the heading as a compass point, and then logically calculate the catching point. By the time any outfielder did this, of course, the game would be long over. We must assume they just let their brains do the figuring, the quick natural way.

How on earth do we recognize people? A school would no doubt teach us to do it 'logically,' first classifying faces in (a) round, (b) oval, (c) long, and (d), none of the above, or perhaps 'ugly." The same would be done for build, color of hair, eyes, and skin, manner of moving, and so on. It wouldn't work. If we observe, we see that people can pick those they know out of a thousand strangers at a glance, and can even identify a poor photo of a friend. The brain knows how. It even has a special portion that handles this function, important to human life.

How do you drive a car down a winding road? There is no 'logical' way to know how much to turn the wheel to match the road. You estimate, using stored experience of the patterns involved. You get feedback from where the car goes, and adjust. (Watch a driver's hands, and note the hundreds of small corrections constantly being made.)

We have all been brought up to believe that 'logic' is respectable and the highest, most admirable level of thinking. But if we observe, we find there is little we do logically (in the sense of Greek-type, linear, step-by-step logic). Whether we create a meal or masterpiece of sculpture, we likely work in a very confused, murky way. Scientists rarely make a 'logical' discovery; almost always luck or accident or serendipity or transfer is the key. (Science began as an *escape* from neat, orderly logic, which then as now usually produces neat, respectable, but quite wrong answers.) Computer programmers work more heuristically than logically. The arts, of course, almost by definition, represent non-logical approaches. Technology develops bit by bit, over decades to centuries, through accretion.

The Brain Came First

The human brain is not logical. I submit that *no* part of it is logical, despite the endlessly repeated, but unsupported, assertion that the left hemisphere is. We do not understand speech sequentially, for example—we have to shuffle the words around, *extract patterns*, using clues from context and situation, and feedback (much as we do in driving a car along a winding road.)

The brain existed in its very much present form at least 50,000 years ago to the best of our knowledge. 'Logic' was not invented till far later, fewer than 5,000 years ago. There is no conceivable way the brain can be 'naturally' logical. It attempts logical processing under protest, and usually comes up with garbled answers. We need only observe, à la Yogi, to see that happening.

Schools dote on logic, especially if neat, orderly, sequential, simple, and verbal. The whole class-and-grade structure expresses the notion that children are all alike and can be processed on that basis. Teachers are required to make up tidy, logical lesson plans. Courses are logical.

Reading is one example. It is analyzed into phonics and 'subskills,' often taught in a sacred sequence—with embarrassingly bad results. Arithmetic, which does embody a logic, is also taught logically in strict sequence, with even worse outcomes. The parts don't become wholes.

Such is the hold that logic has on many formally educated people that they refuse to learn from endless failures. They repeat the logical efforts, perhaps with minor variations, that of course make no real differences.

Brain-Compatible Learning

But, with new understanding of the brain available, at last we begin to get on the right track.

We see that the brain is the organ for learning, and that if we are to educate people we must learn what the human brain is for, and how it came to be, and how it works—probabilistically, intuitively, building programs by the tens of thousands, extracting patterns from confusion, utilizing feedback. We must see that the brain is really three brains, of different evolutionary ages, each with its own nature, aims, and capabilities!

With this new knowledge, it is possible now to build comprehensive, *brain-based* theories of human learning (not rat learning) that can be applied to instruction. I have suggested Proster Theory as one candidate; perhaps it is now the best known. Such theories promise to bring about enormously better learning outcomes.

The basic concept of having instruction fit the real nature of the brain, rather than trying to make the brain fit the school, opens the doors to recognizing individual differences and learning styles or strategies.

As long as schools assume that the brain is logical and that teaching and organization should be logical, regimentation, too, is logical; and any real individualizing becomes a confession of error practically a heresy. So the schools give lip service to individual differences but vigorously resist giving up or even modifying much the class-and-grade system that denies differences.

Only as we become familiar with the nature of the human brain (not so much details as the overall structure), can we begin to appreciate fully the huge range of differences in what has been stored in students' brains and the consequent differences in their learning styles.

Schooling no longer can continue in the old traditional ways, I believe. The heat is on schools to produce learning by all students. That calls for scrapping the worship of logic that brings so much failure, and turning to the brain as it is. For educators, students, communities, and our nation, the consequences could prove extremely pleasing.

Reprinted from the Learning Styles Network Newsletter for Winter 1982 and St. John's University, Jamaica, NY 11439, by permission of LSN, through the courtesy of Mabel Dennison.

LITERARY OUTBURST:

WHAT THEY LEARN IN SCHOOL

by Jerome Stern

In the schools now, they want them to know all about marijuana, crack, heroin, and amphetamines,
Because then they won't be interested in marijuana, crack, heroin, and amphetamines,
But they don't want to tell them anything about sex because if the schools tell them about sex,
Then they'll be interested in sex,
But if the schools don't tell them anything about sex,
Then they will have high morals, and no one will get pregnant, and everything will be all right,
And they do want them to know a lot about computers so they will outcompete the Japanese,
But they don't want them to know anything about real science because then they will lose their faith and become secular humanists,
And they do want them to know all about this great land of ours so they will be patriotic,
But they don't want them to learn about the tragedy and pain in its real history because then they will be critical about this great land of ours and we will be passively taken over by a foreign power,
And they want them to learn how to think for themselves so they can get good jobs and be successful,
But they don't want them to have books that confront them with real ideas because that will confuse their values,
And they'd like them to be good parents,
But they can't teach them about families because that takes them back to how you get to be a family,
And they want to teach them about how not to get AIDS
But that would mean telling them how not to get AIDS,
And they'd like them to know the Constitution,
But they don't like some of those amendments except when they are involved by the people they agree with,
And they'd like them to vote,
But they don't want them to discuss current events because it might be controversial and upset them and make them want to take drugs, which they already have told them all about,
And they want to teach them experience of morality,

But they also want them to learn that winning is not everything, it is the Only Thing.
And they want them to be well-read,
But they don't want them to read Chaucer or Shakespeare or Aristophanes or Mark Twain or Ernest Hemingway or John Steinbeck, because that will corrupt them,
And they don't want them to know anything about art because that will make them weird,
But they do want them to know about music so they can march in the band,
And they mainly want to teach them not to question, not to challenge, not to imagine, but to be obedient and behave well so that they will no longer stand out in the crowd, as the second millennium lurches to its panicky close.

This monologue aired March 17, 1989 on "All Things Considered," National Public Radio's daily news broadcast. Stern is a professor of English at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

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REBUILDING: FIRST STEPS

by Theodore R. Sizer
The Coalition of Essential Schools

Repairing the schools is not enough, says Mr. Sizer in agreeing with the Carnegie Report; they must be rebuilt. The Coalition of Essential Schools hopes to show how a 'rebuilt' high school can serve students and teachers Better than the conventional schools to which we are accustomed.

Rebuild the schools, the Carnegie Task Force tells us. Repairing them is not enough, because their structure and organization are so fundamentally flawed. The able, committed teachers whom students require will not work long or effectively under the conditions that all to many of today's schools impose.

Many of the commission reports of the early 1980s suggested likewise, but only a handful share the Carnegie Task Force's uncompromising insistence on challenging the assumptions underlying school organizations—and thus schooling itself. More important, virtually no state government initiatives have assumed the necessity for careful 'rebuilding.'

Most commission efforts have implicitly accepted existing school design and so have merely reinforced it.

Age grading, subject organization, and the common metaphor of 'delivery of instructional services' have all been retained. What has been added is more of the same: a longer school year, an extra class period each day, rigorous student testing, and so on. When the reform reports have cited basic structural flaws (e.g., student/teacher ratios in the high schools of more than 150:1 and the student/counselor ratios twice as high), the costs of changing them have rarely been realistically addressed.

The basic design of high schools and the assumptions that lie behind it are at the heart of the problem, and they are a concern shared by the Carnegie Task force and by the Coalition of Essential Schools. The Coalition is a practical effort at 'rebuilding,' at making new compromises in the goals and procedures of schooling that will allow for better performance by students and more sensible conditions of work for teachers. The Coalition, organized in 1984, follows the findings of A Study of High Schools, a research project spanning the years 1979 through 1984 that produced three books. Like A Study of High Schools, the Coalition is co-sponsored by the National

Association of Secondary School Principals and by the National Association of Independent Schools.

The Coalition currently includes 40 schools, ten in a 'core' group working intensively, with the project's central staff at Brown University. A growing number of 'associate' schools will be forming networks and meeting in regional symposia with only limited contact with Brown. Some members of this group are already working with neighboring universities. Each element of the Coalition, including the Brown staff, funds itself; no money passes among the elements for services rendered, though the fact of their collaboration is helpful in fund raising.

There is no 'essential school model.' Each school in the Coalition is autonomous and must develop a program and a policy strategy appropriate to its own setting and constituency. What ties the Coalition partners together is a set of ideals, the practical expression of which varies with each community. These ideas reduced to a set of nine generally stated principles surprise few veteran school pupil. although they are in no sense new, taking them seriously is. For example, the practical implications of a serious, thorough intellectual education for all - even youngsters who appear indifferent or hostile - are substantial. And limiting teaching loads to no more than 80 students per teacher, when combined with a commitment to hold per-pupil expenditures roughly constant, painful decisions.

Although each school works on its own, staff members from the core schools and from Brown University meet regularly, and the principals of the ten core schools form a council that meets twice a year to oversee the program. This council is assisted by an external advisory committee made up of experienced scholars and school administrators. The Brown staff visits the schools regularly, forward studies of key issues that appear to affect all the schools, and organizes workshops and symposia for the entire Coalition.

PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

The high schools in the Coalition are all well-regarded in their communities. What problems, then, do their leaders seek to solve? The emphases vary from school to school, but there are a number of common concerns. Some teachers believe that too many of their students are too little engaged in their schooling—not learning with the excitement, imagination, or rigor that school staffs believe is possible. Some youngsters—especially those in the academic 'middle,' the 'unspecial' ones—are lost in the busy shuffle of schooling. The compromises that some students and teachers make—the 'treaties' by which they agree to get along with little work and low standards—quietly gnaw at faculties, even in good schools. The stultifying conditions of work and the lack of positive incentives for vigorous performance by adolescents and adults alike, which seem to make these treaties inevitable, also disturbed many schoolpeople.

Behind these generalized problems lies the belief that high schools as they are conventionally organized create anonymity and make it very difficult to achieve the kind of one-on-one engagement that good learning and teaching require. Students differ, and, though this is inconvenient, such differences are an essential part of our humanity and must be addressed. A school that rigidly locks students into separate age groups and makes few distinctions among students within segregated tracts is a school that guarantees mediocrity. Members of the Coalition see no problem as more troubling than that of impersonality, for the chance of provoking excellent work from any youngster without understanding him or her as an individual is remote—a matter of pure chance or the result of home influences.

Most Coalition schools share a painful sense of their overcommitment. To take seriously each individual student and to push or inspire that youngster to use his or her mind well is a tall order, an impossible one with many youngsters in today's fragmented, distraction-filled high schools. Serious intellectual work—and it is *intellectual* work that Coalition schools ultimately value most—demands time and focused attention, conditions that the jangle of seven unconnected periods a day plus the junior prom, driver education, and all the rest often denied.

One can make a strong independent argument for most of the activities found in contemporary schools—from elaborate schedules to special courses; from units on nuclear education, ecology, cosmetology, and Chinese to a cornucopia of special programs; from the vocational to the therapeutic and recreational. However, it is difficult to make a *relative* argument for many of these activities. For example, do we give up the charge to teach mastery of written English in order to accommodate a model United Nations program? Do we give up thoroughly understanding the U.S. Constitution in order to provide quick coverage of the forms of government in the major nations of the world? Do we trade a solid grasp of the single foreign language for brief exposure to two or three? Do we dispense with two seventh periods each week in order to conduct a competitive interscholastic basketball schedule? These are difficult choices, especially for an institution that has long prided itself on accepting challenges, on taking on any problem that the society assigns it: from training sensitive young voters, to assimilating immigrants, to competing with the Russians, to solving the American disease of racism, to making this nation economically competitive, to helping unwed mothers and fathers cope with the burdens of teenaged parenthood.

Coalition schools believe that the overload of well-intentioned and often noble duties is itself a problem. What is *essential* must be pursued, and general intellectual education is for us the primary essential, the one that best enables all youngsters to observe sensitively, to become informed, to think clearly and with imagination, and to express themselves precisely and persuasively. Such skills are the heart of all good education - whether general, liberal, vocational, civic, or moral. And the focus on them must be primary; all else, whatever its merit, must be secondary.

Saying that the focus of good education must be on essential skills is easy; putting the words into practice is not. The politics of subtraction, the tradeoffs made necessary by true reform, provoke the fiercest form of institutional warfare. Scheduling that slots students and faculty members into one large-group interaction after another must often be redesigned to provide the focus and personalization that good schooling requires. This reassignment of 'turf' must be done carefully, but, whatever painful politics it occasions, it cannot be avoided.

If the aphorism, it is *less is more*. If it has a renewed commitment, it is toward *personalization*, paying attention to the character, needs, and potential of each student. If it can reduce its sense of essential to one word, that word is *thoughtfulness*—clear, informed thinking and decent behavior.

CONVICTIONS AND RESTRAINTS

In addition to consensus on the problems to be addesssed, Coalition participants share additional convictions. Unfortunately, they also work under some common constraints. First, we believe that serious efforts to redesign schools must unavoidably involve all aspects of the institutions. Everything important in the school affects everything else. Change the schedule, and the curriculum is affected. Introduce a new mathematics program that stresses inquiry, and teaching styles and teachers' attitudes are affected. Add a new diploma requirement, and either something else is dropped or the entire program is diluted. As Seymour Sarason has wisely argued, schools are synergistic places, and reform efforts that proceed peace meal are doomed to failure. Total school change does not imply radical, headlong speed, but rather attention to every aspect of the school. Indeed, given their commitment to consider total redesign, most Coalition schools are moving forward at a very deliberate pace.

Second, as they engage in the politics of subtraction, Coalition schools must necessarily be clear on their goals, on their view of what is essential. A fruitful place to start this process of clarifying goals is with 'exhibitions,' that set of exercises by which each student demonstrates his or her mastery of the program. Deciding on the shape and substance of the exhibition forces general issues of priority down to very specific levels. What skills do we wish students to possess, and how can these be displayed? What substantive knowledge must everyone have, and what should be left up to the students to choose? Most important, what is an appropriate ***standard*** of performance for a high school graduate? How can such a standard (for a hierarchy of standards) be presented to all students to catch their interest and to raise their expectations of themselves but not drive them to give up? Shaping the end product, the exhibition, gives clarity to school goals, and setting standards raises fundamental issues about the expectations that teachers have of students and that students have of themselves.

Third, Coalition members are deeply concerned about the 'tone' of their schools. A tone of 'unanxious expectation' is desired; the staff must be demanding and supportive. The students have to do the work, with the teachers in the role of explainers, coaches, cajolers, and provokers. This involves changes not only in teaching styles—then so in the curriculum itself - but also in the very attitudes of teachers and students. Students have to know that their teachers care enough about them to demand much of them. They must know that such caring is itself a 'subject' of the curriculum, an attitude that permeates the entire community. So described, such a tone sounds obvious and hopelessly romantic, but achieving it within a traditional school bureaucracy is profoundly difficult. It starts with the attitudes of the teachers and administrators toward themselves; it takes time to shape and nurture; it demands great flexibility in the school's regimen. For example, can the normal functioning of a school be abruptly stopped and the attention of all focused on some violent incident, such as the explosion of the space shuttle or a fight in school? Or does the routine schedule mindlessly continue, thus signaling to all the low priority placed on human relations?

Finally, Coalition schools accept their experimental nature. We do not share the assurance of those putative school reformers who merely impose new regulations without a period of honest trial. What we all are undertaking is complicated and must be carried out with an attitude of humility and determination. The restructuring we are engaged in deserves care in its design and must be given time for sensitive experimentation and for the identification of unintended consequences.

The members of the Coalition all share some obvious constraints. There is not much new money available for schools, anywhere, and so the schools redesigns have to be fiscally lean. The existing system is a hierarchical bureaucracy, driven more by tradition then by detailed regulation, but affected by both. Bucking such a hegemony is a rugged task. State and local mandates and union contracts can stifle imaginative reform. Happily, both major teacher unions have so far not only supported Coalition experiments but have forthrightly encouraged them. Some state authorities have been equally encouraging; some have been simply disinterested; a few have been grudgingly tolerant, but hardly encouraging. No state vigorously—that is, with consequential dollars attached—promotes ambitious school redesign activities, a lamentable gap in legislative policy.

Behind this, of course, lie public attitudes. As Diane Ravitch and David Cohen have argued, Americans get the schools they want or deserve. The 'shopping mall high school' evolved because we wanted it, and the school that values thorough mastery of the intellectual skills and knowledge essential in a modern society will appear only when we want it to. We in the Coalition believe that Americans today *will* want something better than the generous, yet often mindless, status quo when they have seen some specific examples of what schools might be.

FIRST MODELS

The plans of Coalition schools are evolving in ways that are often similar. Leadership from the principals is crucial; so is the leadership of the teachers—or at least the significant core group of them. Each school is trying to build consensus among staff members, central authorities, governing boards, unions, parents, and students. All are fashioning focused, simplified curricula that are built on a firm foundation of what is deemed 'essential.' Teaching is often done by teams. Math/science and humanities/social studies/art combinations are common, as is a simply organized daily schedule.

All Coalition schools are trying to 'reach' students, to personalize schooling. Some schools are moving toward a staffing pattern in which most adults in the school are at least part-time teachers; administrative and other support functions are being reduced to the barest minimums (one of the tradeoffs of reducing teaching loads).

Coalition schools have been initially designed in one of three ways. Some are *schools within schools*. For example, Radford Gregg, Larry Barnes, and their colleagues at Paschal High School in Fort Worth, Texas, have created an autonomous unit within the school that will ultimately accommodate several hundred students drawn from the entire city. If this experimental unit works well, its influence will spread throughout the school program. Barbara Anderson and Mary Jane McCalmon in Portland, Paul Gounaris and Al Moser in Providence, Judy Codding and Della Selby in Bronxville, and Sam Billups and Marion Finney in Baltimore have similar plans.

An entirely new school, Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS), has been created in East Harlem by Deborah Meier and her colleagues. It is an extension of Central Park East Elementary School, of which Meier is also director. CPESS is part of superintendent, Carlos Medina's plan for a variety of 'magnet' schools within District #4 of the New York City Public Schools. Another entirely new school, this one private, had been planned as an extension of the United Day (elementary) School in Laredo, Texas, but this project has recently been tabled because of financial difficulties in the region.

Finally, Coalition high schools are attempting gradually to change their entire programs by introducing schoolwide plans. One of the earliest and most ambitious of these was Thayer High School in Winchester, New Hampshire, where Dennis Littky and his colleagues have designed a simple but imaginative program appropriate to rural population. Tom Davis, Bill Balch and a host of colleagues at Westbury High School in Houston, Texas have developed a plan for that large urban secondary school: a 90-student, 3-teacher pilot 9th grade worked through during the 1985-86 academic year; seven similar teams will be launched for all 9th graders during 1986-87, while the pilot program moves to the 10th grade. Clinton Vickers at Adelphi Academy (Brooklyn, New York), Sr. Theresa Foley at St. Xavier's (Coventry, Rhode Island), and Irving Hamer at Park Heights Street Academy (Baltimore, Maryland) and their colleagues have had programs moving in directions congenial to those of the Coalition since the 1970s and early 1980s. The plans in these smaller high schools are being adapted gradually to conform more closely to the principles of Coalition.

For the Future

Taking the principles of the Coalition seriously often has substantial consequences. Some of these principles are especially useful points of entry for all those involved in planning for a member school. Staff members at Brown have taken four of these and, with the help of working parties of teachers from core and associate schools, are preparing studies that will help sharpen the issues and suggest ways to proceed.

Arthur Powell is deeply involved with what he calls 'mapping the territory' represented by the idea of student exhibitions for the award of a diploma. This is an old idea. Exhibitions for a staple of American academies in the 18th century, and the notion of progress according to performance has many contemporary advocates. Powell's reconnaissance will identify the most useful of these plans and will clarify the Coalition's particular notion of exhibitions. Holly Houston is working on a definition of the pedagogy of 'coaching' that is addressed particularly to Coalition schools; she is also working on a catalog of consequences for overall school practice if coaching is properly stressed and on possible activities to help teachers develop coaching skills. Grant Wiggins is studying both the curricular directions most likely to enable students 'to learn to use their minds well' and the tensions between that aim and the specific curricula that often value mechanical rather than thoughtful mastery.

Finally, Joseph McCarthy, Susan Follett, and I have adapted the detailed operating budget of a representative (non-Coalition) high school into a fictional, but realistic 'Alethes High School.' From this 'real' school budget, we have modeled a variety of possibilities for a 'Mythos Essential High School.' These possibilities stress a variety of different priorities, but all are constrained by Alethes High School's bottom line. Each of these four studies raises important issues and exposes questions of priority for most Coalition schools.

The Coalition hopes to make a positive difference by showing how a 'rebuilt' high school can serve students and teachers better than the doughty conventional model to which we are so accustomed. While the first indications of success are the number of Coalition schools are very promising, the incentives for such ambitious change within the existing system are few, and some people counsel more radical reform strategies that by-pass the existing apparatus of schooling. However, we continue to work within the system.

I personally take courage so to perceive from my two years of work with many school colleagues, veterans of many kinds of school reform, who have found a way to choke back their cynicism and frequent bitterness and try something that they believe will serve young people better. They long for time and freedom to work out their ideas, and they need some reasonable privacy for this working out. They are likely to receive neither. Yet, as the Carnegie Task Force argues, improved schooling can be fashioned only by such people. The obligation they carry is heavy; this may be the last chance for public education as we know it.

COMMON PRINCIPLES OF THE COALITION

Local adaptation of common, general principles is the essence of the Coalition's plan. These nine principles are:

1. An Intellectual Focus

Schools should focus on helping adolescents to learn to use their minds well. Schools should not attempt to be 'comprehensive,' if such a claim is made at the expense of the schools' central intellectual purpose.

2. Simple goals

Schools' goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the design of programs should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that students need, rather than necessarily by 'subjects' as conventionally defined. The aphorism 'less is more' should dominate; curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely 'cover content.'

3. Universal goals

The schools' goals should apply to all students, while the means to achieve these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of adolescents.

4. Personalization

To the maximum extent feasible, teaching and learning should be personalized. Efforts should be directed towards seeing that no teacher has direct responsibility for more than 80 students. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions regarding the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time, and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

5. **Student-as-worker**

The governing practical metaphor of the schools should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

6. **Student exhibitions**

Students entering secondary school studies are those who can show competence in language and elementary mathematics. Students of traditional high school age, but not yet at appropriate levels of competence to enter secondary school studies, will be provided intensive remedial work to assist them in meeting these standards quickly. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation 'exhibition.' This exhibition by the student of his or her grasp of the central skills and knowledge of the program may be jointly administered by the faculty and by higher authorities. As the diploma is awarded when earned, the program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of 'credits earned' by 'time spent' in class. The emphasis is on students' demonstration that they can do important things.

7. **Attitude**

The tone of the schools should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ('I won't threaten you, but I expect much of you'), of trust (until abused), and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to particular students and teachers should be emphasized, and parents should be treated as essential collaborators.

8. **Staff**

Principals and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialist second (experts in one particular discipline). Staff members should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and should show a sense of commitment to the entire school.

9. Budget

Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total loads per teacher of 80 or fewer pupils, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed by more than ten percent that at traditional schools. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional comprehensive secondary schools.

THEODORE SIZER *is the author of* ***Horace's Compromise*** *and the founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools.*

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THE ENGLISH SPEAK ENGLISH AND THE ZUCANINOS ZULAN ZUCANINO

by John Carroll

(from *This Magazine is About Schools* , Autumn, 1969)

If I tell you how this project—the making up of a language called Zucanino—got started, I can also tell you something about the school where I work without resorting to the 'open-structured ungraded vertically grouped' palaver that's so frequently tossed around.

In the spring of last year I became aware of the work that two boys, a nine and ten year old, had been doing with another teacher in the wood working area. Each day Chris and Jo would accost me with musical instruments they had been making by stretching steel wires of different thicknesses along lengths of board using eye-screws to tighten and tune the strings. They would thrust one against my ear and pluck out a medley of queer throngs and brongs like Anthony Raleigh courting a sitar. I became impressed with the increasing sophistication and craftsmanship of their work. Jo-Jo had carved his board down to an attractive and manageable shape and Chris had devised a slidable fretboard to produce slippery variations of sound. Lyn Raphael, Jo-Jo's teacher, became excited about the possibilities for free dance movement to the music of his 'frog board'. But the instrument had no resonating box and it was difficult to dance if you had to hold the things up to your ear. So we grabbed a cassette tape recorder, invited a few girls to join us on percussion (the stick and coconut shell tattoo was excellent) and repaired to a near-by parent's basement where we could find some quiet. The cassette amplified the sounds beautifully and after a few sessions we had produced some delightful, loud and rather strange music. I was pleased with how seriously the kids worried over the structure of each set, the critical attention they gave each playback. I transcribed these bits of dialogue from the first tape.

Chris: 'That's awful!'
Me: 'Why?'
Chris: 'It's too instrumentalized.'
Lorna: 'What's that mean?'
Chris: 'It's got too much in it!'
and
Lorna: 'That's good. That's part good.'
Me: 'I agree. But why?'

Lorna: 'It repeats. When it repeats like that, then gets faster and faster, that's exciting.'

A few days later our project took on a new dimension when a group of older children asked us if we would do some music to go with a drama they were creating. The drama involved a primitive tribe that had been or was just about to be discovered in the depths of the Brazilian Rain Forest. Chris assured me that primitive peoples plucked their bows for musical accompaniment, so we kept the 'frog boards.' But at everyone's insistence we scrapped the triangle and xylophones we had been using as too recognizably modern. Still—and I don't know why—our new sessions, which now included six new drummers and thrummers, a recording technician and two Amazon chieftains going at one another with broomsticks—were a drag. We got to bitching and carping and hogging the instruments, all of us, and I came close to abandoning the project.

That evening I was having a beer and wondering why our music had been so unconvincing when the very obvious crept up on me. It suddenly seemed inconceivable that a blood-thirsty tribe of Amazons engaged in combative dance ritual would not make use of their own voices. So I resolved to try it again and have the musicians chant a few nonsense syllables.

Next morning I had a meeting with some of the girls with whom I had been reading English poetry. I guess I had the idea of the chanting scheme in the back of my mind when I launched into a discussion about the names of things, how things came to be called what they are. I again came to the astonishing realization that children, even nine and ten-year-olds, do not clearly perceive the distinction between the world and the thing named. Luckily, we had Beatriz with us. Beatriz comes from Brazil and is fluent in Portuguese as well as English. For a while she and I provided foreign words for the objects in the room and outside the windows while the other children enjoyed the strange sounds and remarked on the striking similarities. Then I asked the children to make up words for some of the things we had mentioned. They were stymied—clearly they thought the idea absurd. It seemed obvious to them that there were just as many words in the world as there are, for instance, rocks. Just as many and no more.

Maybe they didn't know all the words, but asking them to invent one was like asking them to make a rock. We talked about how language must have come into being, from the very earliest primitive utterance.

I started them off dramatically - 'What's a cry of pain? Let's hear a grunt of delight!' Then we began to name things. The words, mostly two syllable ones at first, came Japanese-y 'nogo, niti, gopo.' The children seemed already to have forfeited their baby-talk facility for producing amusing complex sounds. It wasn't until a day later that the extended words (RITOPAN - run) and un-English-like sounds (MLOKIO - black) were invented.

At the same meeting I raised the concept of gender, with a lot of help from Beatriz, who admitted to the children that the implied sexuality of things in Portuguese often seemed illogical but sometimes made good poetic sense. We made the first rule of Zucanino (we hadn't spoken yet of making up a language, let alone named it). We decided to make the words we invented end in 'o' if they were male and 'u' if they were female. The children had no trouble accepting this concept:

'If 'man' is 'TAPO,' what shall we call 'woman'?'

'TAPU.'

'If we call the sun 'INO', the moon could be...?'

''INU'I - Because the moon is like the wife of the sun.'

'O.K. Then what shall we call |food'?'

'MUGO.'

'But why male?'

The children looked at one another and shrugged but from the looks on their faces I could tell that they were satisfied that it was, as Lorna had said, 'MUGO' and unquestionably male.'

'What about 'water'?', I asked.

'NAGU', said Anne.

'Why female?'

'Well ... because when water runs very fast over rocks it sounds like girls laughing.'

I found this answer more than satisfactory. Next we talked about English prefixes and suffixes and how English uses the broad 'ee' sound to describe little things (pony, Johnnie etc.) I concocted the diminutive prefix ITO—(my high school Spanish creeping in). Sticking it onto words we had already invented gave us ITAPO—boy, ITAPU—girl, and ITORAMO—pony. Even before I had a chance to talk about number the children were using 's' for the plural. When I pointed it out to them they seemed adamant about keeping it. Beatriz told them that Portuguese and Spanish both used 's'. The children talked about the appropriateness, to them, of using the sibilant sound - it seemed to draw a word out to include more than one whatever was mentioned - so we kept it. At the end of the session I wrote down the words we had and stuck them in my pocket.

Next day we met again and I brought out the word list. 'We need some good doing words,' I said, 'some hard working*verbs*. What will our men and horses do? What shall we do with the food and water?' Then I made another rule, without explaining why: I asked that all the words be made to end in AN. The girls were amenable, they were still having trouble concocting syllables and this helped them out a bit. The girls began making up verbs, talk, fly, run, and of course, love and fight and kill. (ZUCAN meant 'love', hence the name ZUCANINO which is what we eventually came to call the language of our sun worshippers). I was pleased that a derivative word occurred out of the previous day's MUGO—food. The girls thought MUGAN would be the obvious word for 'to cook.' We had a brief discussion of how verbs in English change to tell us *when* and by whom something was done. The kids were wide-eyed when I pointed out the rigid paradigms of English verbs to them. 'How can it be,' I teased, 'that you speak perfect English, even *original* sentences to me and you don't know a thing about English grammar!' They were realizing, I think for the first time, something of the miracle of speech and language. We gave Zucanino a past and future tense (by dropping the AN and adding AR or APA).

By now the excitement was quite high and the children exclaimed 'Hey!' We could make up a language!' I agreed that it might be fun and after several days we had put together a fairly complex language, one which the children enjoyed speaking out loud. We had accrued a command form, an interrogative suffix KA (which I borrowed from my smattering of Japanese...talk about losing an inventive facility!) and a verb 'to be' RASAN. We opened up observations on English word order. 'What's the difference between saying 'the boy ate the bear' and 'the bear ate the boy'?'—and inflection. 'When you ask a question a piece of the verb goes up front and your voice goes up at the end.' They continued to produce derivative words. They said that if NITI meant 'time', NITINO would be sun-time or day and NITINU would mean night. To ask what time is one says 'NITI RASANKA' or 'Time is...?'

To round out the project, a week later I reassembled the music makers, the Amazon warriors and my chorus of Zucanino linguists lustily chanting braggadocios like, 'ZUCANINO ITAPOS DUGATAPA MIKOSE' (Zucanino boys will fight bravely) in a final session with the cassette recorder.

I hope no casual reader is thinking that for a moment that I'm suggesting Zucanino be taught in the primary grades as a sort of pat children's Esperanto. The language itself is as expendable as chalk dust. The merit of the project lies in the excitement of invention, the dramatic recreation of language beginning with primitive utterance and building a complex pattern of grammar and involving an original rhythmic poetic sense. The 'rules' came easy because the children dealt first with the abstract concepts, seeing the need of complexities before inventing them. At first the girls were excited about the aura of secrecy that surrounded the language. ('...and nobody else will know what we are saying!') but as the desire to communicate grew on them they invited more children into the project. We by no means exhausted all the possibilities that the activity suggests. An anthropologist friend of mine, for instance, was interested in investigating, through children's fantasy, various other aspects of civilization. What was the religion of the Zucaninos and how did it affect their language? When Roger Gilbert, a teacher at the school, expressed some amazement that I had introduced the verb 'to be' into such a rudimentary language, I had to admit it hadn't occurred to me that it could be left out! I have since become aware (in a most unscholarly way) of the convictions of Korzybski and D. David Bourland Jr. on the philosophical dangers of 'to be' and would like some time to explore with children language concepts that omit it. But by causing Zucanino to parallel closely with English, I think I've helped these nine year olds to achieve a strong introduction to English grammar without resorting to the dry store of paradigms and diagrams that's usually served up to older children. (I was blind to English grammar all through the fifth and sixth grades; not until I began conning Latin patterns did it begin to make sense to me).

If the children's interest in Zucanino holds out through the summer vacation we will, of course, revive and expand it. Quite possibly they will suggest 'Let's make up a language like we did last year.' and we'll begin anew. The whole thing was happy accident for me, and I'm lucky enough to be working in a school where projects can proliferate and a fortuitous idea can be pursued as long as it has meaning for the children.

John Carroll was a janitor at Fayerweather School in Cambridge, Mass. and has been re-hired this year as a teacher, though he's still known to the kids as 'John Janitor.'

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ORGANIC TEACHING
by Sylvia Ashton-Warner

I can't dissociate the activity in an infant room from peace and war. So often I have seen the destructive vent, beneath an onslaught of creativity, dry up under my eyes. Especially with the warlike Maori five-year-olds who pass through my hands in hundreds, arriving with no other thought in their heads than to take, break, fight and be first. With no opportunity for creativity they may well develop, as they did in the past, with fighting as the ideal of life. Yet all this can be expelled through the creative vent, and the more violent the boy the more I see that he creates, and when he kicks the others with his big boots, treads on fingers on the mat, hits another over the head with a piece of wood or throws a stone, I put clay into his hands, or chalk. He can create bombs if he likes or draw my house in flame, but it is the creative vent that is widening all the time and the destructive one atrophying, however much it may look to the contrary. And anyway, I have always been more afraid of the weapon unspoken than of the one on a blackboard.

With all this in mind therefore I try to bring as many facts of teaching into the creative vent as possible, with emphasis on reading and writing. And that's just what organic teaching is; all subjects in the creative vent. It's just as easy for a teacher, who gives a child a brush and lets him paint, to give him a pencil and let him write, and to let him pass his story to the next one to read. Simplicity is so safe. There's no occasion whatever for the early imposition of a dead reading, a dead vocabulary. I'm so afraid of it. It's like a frame over a young tree making it grow in an unnatural shape. It makes me think of that curtailment of a child's expansion of which Erich Fromm speaks, of that unlived life of which destructiveness is the outcome. 'And instead of the wholeness of the expansive tree we have only the twisted and stunted bush.' The trouble is that a child from a modern respectable home suffers such a serious frame on his behaviour long before he comes near a teacher. Nevertheless I think that after a year of organic work the static vocabularies can be used without misfortune. They can even, under the heads of external stimulus and respect for the standard of English, become desirable.

But only when built upon the organic foundation. And there's hardly anything new in the conception of progress from the known to the unknown. It's just that when the inorganic reading is imposed first it interferes with integration; and it's upon the integrated personality that everything is built. We've lost the gracious movement from the inside outward. We overlook the footing. I talk sometimes about a bridge from the pa (pa: Maori village) to the European environment, but there is a common bridge for a child of any race and of more moment than any other: the bridge from the inner world outward. And that is what organic teaching us. An indispensable step in integration. Without it we get this one-patterned mind of the New Zealand child, accruing from so much American influence of the mass-mind type. I think we already have so much pressure toward sameness through radio, film and comic outside the school, that we can't afford to do a thing inside that is not toward individual development, and from this stance I can't see that we can indulge in the one imposed reading for all until the particular variety of a mind is set. And a cross-section of children from different places in New Zealand provides me with an automatic check on the progress of the one-patterned mind. (I own seventy fancy-dress costumes which I lend.) All the children want the same costumes. If you made dozens of cowboy and cowgirl costumes, hundreds of Superman and thousands of Rocket Man costumes and hired them at half a guinea a go, you'd get every penny of it and would make a fortune vast enough to retire on and spend the rest of your life in the garden. As for my classic—Bo-Peep, the Chinese Mandarin, Peter Pan and the Witch and so on—they so gather dust that they have had to be folded and put away. It's this sameness in children that can be so boring. So is death boring.

To write peaceful reading books and put them in an infant room is not the way to peace. They don't even scratch the surface. No child ever asked for a Janet or a John costume. There is only one answer to destructiveness and that is creativity. And it never was and never will be any different. And when I say so I am in august company.

The noticeable thing in New Zealand society is the body of people with their inner resources atrophied. Seldom have they had to reach inward to grasp the thing that they wanted. Everything, from material requirements to ideas, is available ready-made. From mechanical gadgets in the shops to sensation in the films they can buy almost anything they fancy. They can buy life itself from the film and radio—canned life.

And even if they tried to reach inward for something that maybe they couldn't find manufactured, they would no longer find anything there. They've dried up. From babyhood they have had shiny toys put into their hands, and in the kindergartens and infant rooms bright pictures and gay material. Why conceive anything of their own? There has not been the need. The capacity to do so has been atrophied and now there is nothing there. The vast expanses of the mind that could have been alive with creative activity are now no more than empty vaults that must, for comfort's sake, be filled with non-stop radio, and their conversation consists of a list of platitudes and cliches.

I can't quite understand why.

From what I see of modern education the intention is just the opposite: to let children grow up in their own personal way into creative and interesting people. Is it the standard textbooks? Is it the consolidation? Is it the quality of the teachers? Is it the access to film and radio and the quality of those luxuries? Or is it the access to low-grade reading material infused through all of these things? I don't know where the intention fails but we end up with the same pattern of a person in nine hundred ninety-nine instances out of a thousand.

I said to a friend of mine, a professor, recently, "What kind of children arrive at the University to you?" He said, "They're all exactly the same." "But," I said, "how can it be like that? The whole plan of primary education at least is for diversity." "Well," he answered, "they come to me like samples from a mill. Not one can think for himself. I beg them not to serve back to me exactly what I have given to them. I challenge them sometimes with wrong statements to provoke at least some disagreement but even that won't work." "But," I said, "you must confess to about three per cent originality." "One in a thousand, he replied. "One in a thousand."

On the five-year-old level the mind is not yet patterned and it is an exciting thought. True, I often get the over-disciplined European five, crushed beyond recognition as an identity by respectable parents, but never Maoris; as a rule a five-year-old child is not boring. In an infant room it is still possible to meet an interesting, unpatterned person. "In the infant room," I told this professor, "we still have identity. It's somewhere between my infant-room level and your university level that the story breaks. But I don't think it is the plan of education itself."

I think that the educational story from the infant room to the university is like the writing of a novel. You can't be sure of your beginning, until you have checked it with your ending. What might come of infant teachers visiting the university and professors visiting the infant room? I had two other professors in my infant room last year and they proved themselves to be not only delightfully in tune but sensitively helpful.

Yet what I believe and what I practise are not wholly the same thing. For instance, although I have reason to think that a child's occupation until seven should not be other than creative in the many mediums, nevertheless I find myself teaching some things.

With all this in mind, therefore, the intent of the infant room is:

the nurturing of the organic idea,
the preservation of the inner resources,
the exercise of the inner eye and
the protraction of the true personality.

I like unpredictability and variation; I like drama and I like gaiety; I like peace in the world and I like interesting people, and all this means that I like life in its organic shape and that's just what you get in an infant room where the creative vent widens. For this is where style is born in both writing and art, for art is the way you do a thing and an education based on art at once flashes out style.

The word "jalopy" made its fascinating appearance the other day. Brian wrote "I went to town in a jalopy bus." This word stirred us. The others cross-questioned him on the character of such a bus. It turned out to mean "rackety" and although the word was picked up at once nevertheless they still ask for it to go up on the spelling list. We haven't had "jalopy" for spelling lately, Brian says. He loves spelling it, which is what I mean when I say that the drive is the children's own. It's all so merciful on a teacher.

Organic reading is not new. The Egyptian hieroglyphs were one-word sentences. Helen Keller's first word, "water," was a one-word book. Tolstoy found his way to it in his peasant school, while, out in the field of UNESCO today, it is used automatically as the only reasonable way of introducing reading to primitive people: in a famine area the teachers wouldn't think of beginning with any words other than "crop," "soil," "hunger," "manure," and the like.

Not that organic reading is exclusively necessary to the illiterate of a primitive race. True, it is indispensable in conducting a young child from one culture to another, especially in New Zealand where the Maori is obliged to make the transition at so tender an age, but actually it is universal. First words are different from first drawings only in medium, and first drawings vary from country to country. In New Zealand a boy's first drawing is anything that is mobile; trucks, trains and planes, if he lives in a populated area, and if he doesn't, it's horses. New Zealand girls, however, draw houses first wherever they live. I once made a set of first readers on these two themes. But Tongan children's first drawings are of trees, Samoan five-year-olds draw churches and Chinese draw flowers. What a fascinating story this makes!

How can a anyone begin any child on any arranged book, however good the book, when you know this? And how good is any child's book, anyway, compared with the ones they write themselves? Of course, as I'm always saying, it's not only reading; it's no more than the *first* reading. The bridge.

It's the bridge from the known to the unknown, from a native culture to a new; and, universally speaking, from the inner man out.

Organic reading is not new; first words have ever meant first wants....Children have two visions, the inner and the outer. Of the two the inner vision is brighter.

I hear that in other infant rooms widespread illustration is used to introduce the reading vocabulary to a five-year-old, a vocabulary chosen by adult educationists. I use pictures too, to introduce the reading vocabulary, but they are pictures of the inner vision and the captions are chosen by the children themselves. True, the picture of the outer, adult-chosen pictures can be meaningful and delightful to children; but it is the captions of the mind pictures that have the power and the light. For whereas the illustrations perceived by the outer eye cannot be other than interesting, the illustrations seen by the inner eye are organic, and it is the captioning of these that I call the "Key Vocabulary.'

I see the mind of a five-year-old as a volcano with two vents; destructiveness and creativeness. And I see that to the extent that we widen the creative channel, we atrophy the destructive one. And it seems to me that since these words of the key vocabulary are no less than the captions of the dynamic life itself, they course out through the creative channel, making their contribution to the drying up of the destructive vent. From all of which I am constrained to see it as creative reading and to count it among the arts....

How much hangs on the love of reading, the instinctive inclination to hold a book! *Instinctive*. That's what it must be. The reaching out for a book needs to become an organic action, which can happen at this yet formative age. Pleasant words won't do. Respectable words won't do. They must be words organically tied up, organically born from the dynamic life itself. They must be words that are already part of the child's being....

Excerpted from The Revolution in the Schools, Ronald Gross and Judith Murphy. Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964.

LITERARY OUTBURST:

THE YELLOW PICTURE

(Author Unknown)

He always wanted to explain things.
But no one cared.
So he drew.
Sometimes he would draw and it wasn't anything.
He wanted to carve it in stone or write it in the sky.
He would be out in the grass and look up in the sky.
And it would be only him and the sun and the things
inside him that needed saying.
And it was after that he drew the picture.
It was a beautiful picture.
He kept it under his pillow and would let no one see it.
And he would look at it every night and think about it.
And when it was dark, and his eyes were closed, he could
still see it .
And it was all of him.
And he loved it.
When he started school he brought it with him .
Not to show anyone, but just to have with him like a
friend.
It was funny about school .
He sat in a square, brown desk
Like all the other square, brown desks
And he thought it should be red
And his room was a square brown room.
Like all the other rooms .
And it was tight and close.
And stiff.
He hated to hold the pencil and chalk,
With his arm stiff and his feet flat on the floor,
Stiff,
With the teacher watching and watching.
The teacher came and spoke to him.
She told him to wear a tie like all the other boys.
He said he didn't like them .
And she said it didn't matter!
After that they drew.

And he drew all yellow and it was the way he felt about morning.
And it was beautiful.
The teacher came and smiled at him.
'What's this?' she said. 'Why don't you draw like Ken's drawing?
Isn't that beautiful?'
After that his mother bought him a tie.
And he always drew airplanes and rocket ships like everyone else.
And he threw the old picture away.
And when he lay alone looking at the sky,
It was big and blue and all of everything,
But he wasn't any more.
He was square inside
And brown,
And his hands were stiff.
And he was like everyone else.
And the things inside him that needed saying didn't need it any more.
It had stopped pushing.
It was crushed.
Stiff.
Like everything else.

The above poem was handed in to a teacher in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, by a Grade 12 student. Although it is not known if he actually wrote the poem himself, it is known that he committed suicide a few weeks later. The poem originally appeared in* GENERATION *, a Saskatchewan-based magazine.

THE SINGING SWORD: IMAGES GUIDE ADOLESCENTS' JOURNEYS

by Pythia Peay

While at Yale University's Divinity School during the early seventies, David Oldfield took a year off to work with emotionally disturbed boys at a Connecticut residential treatment center. Trained in the language of spiritual metaphors he found himself at a loss teaching adolescents who defended themselves with psychiatric terminology. "At the end of a class I would assign homework," recalls Oldfield. "A 13 year-old boy would raise his hand and say, 'You can't give me homework! Didn't my doctor tell you I perseverate under stress?' I didn't even know how to spell perseverate, and here's this kid using it as a way of stopping himself from growing."

Oldfield decided he needed to find a common language. At the time he was involved with a small experiential theater group and deeply immersed in looking at the roles of fantasy and festivity in modern life. "The story line in America then was all about transformation," he explains. "What we were moving away from we were clear about, but what we were moving toward nobody knew. The vehicle we used was the mythical image of the Fool, standing on the edge of a cliff looking out into the unknown."

Taking a leap of his own into the unknown, Oldfield began incorporating fantasy and imagination into his work at the treatment center With these new tools he transformed case histories into personal mythologies and adolescents into story tellers who were able to imagine themselves out of seemingly insurmountable personal crises. "The process back then became one of how to help each other tell our stories in a way that was instructive and that would allow our stories to deepen themselves so that meaning could be found in the mess of our lives. The story itself guided us out of whatever mess we were in, " says Oldfield.

For Oldfield this period became the pivotal chapter in his own life story. After receiving his Master's degree in special education Oldfield moved to Washington, D. C. and began working with hospitalized adolescents at the Psychiatric Institute Foundation where he is now director of the Midway Center for Creative Imagination.

He taught history and English and started offering guided imagery groups to adolescents in his spare time. Inspired by the idea that mythology was the psychology of antiquity. Oldfield brought together mythological themes with issues the teenagers were working on in their treatment. They would travel on time winds or descend into an underworld where they met beasts and monsters and learned to deal with them, sometimes by fighting or tricking them, or by making peace with them The central purpose of these journeys was to create a protected space where the teenagers could experience their own inner images. The adolescents were energized by the process; kids who were so depressed they couldn't talk in group therapy were suddenly writing volumes about a myth they felt they were having.

Oldfield became excited as he saw a deep healing taking place. The primal language of the imagination addressed and helped resolve emotional issues without labeling them "manic depression" or "schizophrenic disorders."

Over the course of fifteen years of intensive clinical work with hospitalized adolescents, of listening to young people, parents, social workers and psychiatrists, Oldfield distilled these guided imagery journeys into a more formal shape: the Journey, a 40-hour program devised as a modern rite of passage for adolescents. "I feel that it's a huge sin of our generation that we have not clarified for ourselves what it means to move into adulthood," says Oldfield vehemently. "Ancient cultures realized what we do not: that the turbulence of adolescence bursts open the doors to the inner world. Recognizing this, the Journey creates a sale container where adolescents can chart the rich domains of their unique inner worlds."

The Journey as Initiation

For Oldfield the classic hero's tale—Theseus braving the minotaur in the depths of the labyrinth or Luke Skywalker battling Darth Vader—best expresses the adolescent spirit. Thus inspired by Joseph Campbell's classic,*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* , Oldfield based the Journey on Campbell's distillation of heroic myths from around the world as laid out in five stages.

The Journey takes roughly 40 hours (although the process is designed to be flexible enough to fit into the schedules of varying institutions) and is facilitated by a person who functions as a Guide, a position similar to that of the elders in ancient rites of passage. Guides do little personal interpretation. Their responsibility is to create the occasion and atmosphere within which the growth process can occur. Students are given illustrated workbooks to keep a running log of their experiences and to record the thoughts they have and the drawings they create in response to guided imagery sessions. The latter are recorded on five audio cassettes and contain relaxation exercises for the symbolic journey and invitations to write and draw in the notebooks.

Before embarking on the first stage of the Journey participants declare a code of honor: No criticism, judgment or analysis of anyone's work, including one's own, is allowed. Then, as they leave the known for the unknown, the adolescents draw a map of their past, synthesizing and placing in context all the important events in their life. These are represented symbolically, as in the map of one participant who drew his middle school years as "The Garden of the Maze of Confusion" because he felt he was always moving without knowing where he was going

The first stage of the Journey, the "Call to Adventure," occurs when the hero leaves the comfort of the status quo. Calls to adventure are usually negative, says Oldfield, because the status quo has become sterile. For example, the Fisher King in the Grail legend gets a wound in his side that won't stop bleeding. As long as his wound bleeds, the land remains barren. This is exactly what adolescence is all about: the territory of childhood no longer allows the teenager to grow.

When the would-be hero leaves the world of the familiar and enters the unknown, he or she cannot go back to childhood. Although many events in a young adolescent's life correspond to crossing this threshold, often the irrevocable steps relate to exploring the world sexually for the first time.

Oldfield stresses that the Journey does not advocate sexual promiscuity for adolescents. What it does do is suggest that teenagers learn to get in touch with and love their bodies. In ancient rites, adolescents were taught to rejoice in the power and ecstasy of their bodies. Oldfield believes that adolescents can begin to experience the wonder of puberty, to learn what is happening to their bodies and to link their genitals with their hearts. If, as a society, we are not actively engaged in the spiritual dimension of love and the joys of sexuality, then teenagers are left only with the physical high, explains Oldfield. We need to wake up, he says, and address this very powerful part of the human spirit.

In "Finding One's Path," the second major phase of the Journey, adolescents seek the paths they will walk through life. In ancient rites this corresponded to the stage when adolescents were sent into the wilderness to fast and be still until they received a vision. These visions established the fact that each person has something special to offer the tribe.

"Developmentally," says Oldfield, "this is the time when kids really need to be needed. Our culture says wait until you graduate from graduate school and then you can make your mark. Well, they need to do that now! They need to start seeing that they are necessary to the workings of this world."

Once adolescents have found their paths, their ability to walk them is tested in the third phase of the Journey, "The Heart of the Labyrinth." "Finding one's own path takes great courage. It requires strength to stand for one's own convictions, listen to one's own wisdom, set one's own goals. It means moving ahead in life without a map, facing the twists and turns, the dead ends and crossroads, armed only with an internal compass," writes Oldfield in the companion book to the program. "The price is high, but the failure to walk one's own path is higher still."

Before entering the labyrinth, kids are taught coping skills to face the dangers they will meet. While in ancient times those threats were primarily external, these days the threats are mostly internal: feelings of guilt or failure, anger or a negative self-image. At this point in the Journey Oldfield uses a lot of improvisational games for emotional growth. In "How Angry Can You Get?" a director sets a scene involving conflict between two people and instructs participants to raise and lower their anger. The point is to discover how to express anger most effectively.

But the most cathartic event in the road of trials and obstacles is confrontation with death. In rites of passage, the image was literal: adults would place adolescents in a grave-like pit and pour goat's blood on top of them. The adults would then walk around the pit talking about the children in the past tense, as though they didn't exist anymore. In heroic literature, the hero's ego is mortified in order for him to better serve a higher purpose.

For adolescents, these mythological images translate readily. The mortification of their ballooning egos can occur when they don't make the football team or they're not invited to the high school dance. The danger, says Oldfield, comes because we give adolescents no context for understanding their suffering at these moments. "We've given them no context for saying 'Aha! You've reached the time where you're being mortified. Let me tell you the story about the time that happened to me.' They need an historical point of view so they can understand in their hearts that this happens to everybody." The separation that occurs when they lose a girl friend, the disintegration that occurs physically as their bodies change, and the times when they have acne at the very moment they want to have pure skin: These are adolescent death experiences, according to Oldfield. Because we as a society tend to avoid death and suffering in all its guises, we do little to help them understand the complex and overwhelming emotions that accompany this stage. "We need to do a lot of educating around death imagery," says Oldfield with concern. "Our kids are just way too upset about death and dying these days. They need to learn the difference between symbolic and literal death, because getting the two confused is what sometimes leads to suicide."

One girl's confrontation with death is a good example. "She drew herself facing death, who is portrayed as a Cyclops," Oldfield reports. Because the monster is so threatening, she thinks they must fight, so she pulls out the sword she's been carrying on her journey. As she pulls it out, the sword begins to glow, then hum. When the sword starts humming, the beast of death starts dancing with lumbering movements. In the story that accompanied her drawing she said, "I need to learn how to dance with death."

"This is a 16-year-old girl who's discovered that the reality of death exists, but that she can't destroy it with her little sword," continues Oldfield. "But it doesn't need to destroy her either. She's come upon an incredibly powerful metaphysical truth—because isn't that what we're all learning with our lives - how to dance with the fact of our own mortality?"

In the fourth phase of the Journey, "The Wood Between the Worlds," what the adolescents have learned on their inner journeys must now give meaning to concerns such as high school proms, college rejection notices and family disagreements. In ancient rites of passage this was the time when the youth was charged to find the "natural expression" of his vision, whether in the form of a song, a dance or story. For the modern initiates of the Journey program, this is the time to paint a mask. The mask is meant to reveal, through color, design, shape and texture, the adolescent's newly discovered self.

During this stage adolescents are encouraged to spend time alone so they can assimilate their powerful inner experiences. This period of solitude—with no workbooks, no guided imagery journeys, nothing to think about but what comes naturally—also serves to honor the reality of the interior world they have just encountered.

In the fifth phase, "The Ceremony of Passage," adolescents create a ceremony or celebration to which they invite their parents. Traditionally, this is when the youths returned to the tribe to give of their experience and signify their submission to something greater than themselves. Through storytelling, improvisations or readings, group members claim their growth, their knowledge, their new stature as adults. They also present their masks—symbols of the new people they have become—to their parents. This allows the parents to acknowledge that the person before them is no longer a powerless child.

Because parents wanted a more active role in the closing ceremony of the Journey, Oldfield recently created *The Journey,* a beautifully designed workbook in which parents recall their own experiences of growing up. This story is then presented as a gift to their child at the closing ceremony.

Back in the "Real" World

At present the Journey is being offered through the Psychiatric Institutes of America, which has about 60 hospitals around the country. For the last 18 months, Oldfield has been training therapists to use the program (currently, it is used in 14 different hospitals, from San Antonio to Florida to New Hampshire).

Oldfield does not glorify his work with adolescents, but describes it as "frightening, awful, dirty, confusing work." "It is the sacred function of adolescence by virtue of where they are in the life cycle to demonstrate by their lives the tragic flaws of the way adults are living their lives. My sense of the tragic flaw of modern times is that because we have lost the spiritual dimension of the American myth and are transitioning into a new myth, life has become too materialistic, too oriented to the here and now. The kids of today are exposing that flaw by totally immersing themselves in the present—too much sex, too many drugs, too self-indulgent ."

It is this spiritual imbalance that Oldfield is trying to correct through his work journeying with adolescents.

Reprinted from the Network News, Winter, 1990. Pythia Peay is a freelance writer in the Washington D.C. area who specializes in cultural, psychological and spiritual issues.

NEW VIEWS OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE:
A far broader range of important skills and abilities emerges.

by Marie Winn

Howard Gardner says he is trying to "shake things up and pluralize things a bit."

—A narrow idea of intelligence misleads some children into thinking they are stupid.

THE SEVEN TYPES OF INTELLIGENCE:

- **LINGUISTIC**
- **INTRAPERSONAL**
- **LOGICAL MATHEMATICAL**
- **MUSICAL**
- **INTERPERSONAL**
- **SPATIAL**
- **BODILY—KINESTHETIC**

INTELLIGENCE—the dark secret of American social science and education is coming out of the closet. Once intelligence was perceived as a narrow group of mental abilities, those measurable by an IQ test. But according to that view great groups of the population turned out to be not very smart or educable. Since these groups were generally composed of poor minorities, nobody liked to talk about intelligence very much—it seemed somehow un-American. In recent years a new definition of intelligence has been gaining acceptance, one which includes a far greater range of mental abilities among the components of human cognition. This conceptual change foreshadows the most far-reaching social and educational consequences.

The idea that intelligence is a single thing, a kind of brain power that can be measured by a test the way electric power may be measured by a galvanometer, has informed thinking in the academic and research world for much of this century. Although French psychologist Alfred Binet, creator of the first extensively used intelligence test in 1905, saw intelligence as the exercise of a variety of mental faculties, his disciple Charles Spearman, an English psychologist, added a principle that soon became widely accepted: there is a single factor common to all these diverse functions. He called this factor "general intelligence" and symbolized it with a lower-case g. All cognitive activity, Spearman proposed, required access to that g factor.

While there was always dispute, sometimes violent disagreement, about whether this factor is basically innate or more or less susceptible to environmental influence, psychologists after Spearman continued to believe in the g factor and worked to create new and better tests to measure it. In 1912 William Stern, a German psychologist, invented the concept of the intelligence quotient, which divided the "mental age" of a person (as discovered through a test) by the chronological age, thereby coming up with a fraction. Four years later, when Stanford University psychologist Lewis Madison Terman came up with an American version of Binet's test that came to be known as the Stanford-Binet—he multiplied the final result by 100, to avoid the fraction—the stage was set for large-scale intelligence testing throughout America.

Yet a curious and strangely neglected fact about IQ tests serves to cast doubt on their reliability as a measure of intelligence. While these scores do predict success in school fairly well, there little correlation between how people score on IQ tests and their later success in life. The numbers of people with undistinguished childhood IQ scores who excel in later life, as well as the numbers of certified "geniuses" who come to naught, are legion. Clearly, what the standard IQ test measures is but a small part of the complex conglomeration of elements that make up human intelligence, a part that may not have much to do with those cognitive abilities that allow people to function successfully in various walks of life.

Today the g factor concept of intelligence no longer dominates scientific discussion. In its place is a far more pluralistic view. According to John L Horn, a psychologist at the University of Southern California, "What we see as intelligence, and tend to regard as a whole, is in fact a mosaic of many distinct units. "

Robert J. Sternberg, a psychologist at Yale, has constructed a "triarchic" theory of human intelligence, which focuses on such areas as common sense and insight. J. P. Guilford, a California psychologist has classified intellectual acts into 120 categories, while one researcher at a recent meeting of psychologists suggested that humans might have as many as 80,000 intellectual abilities.

By far the most intuitively satisfying of the current approaches is Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, or M.I. theory. Gardner, a psychologist and recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award, runs a research institution at Harvard Graduate School of Education named Project Zero which is a fertile testing ground for many of his ideas .Using data from such diverse sources as neurology, anthropology, psychology and pathology, Gardner has come up with seven areas of intellectual competence— intelligences he calls them—that are relatively independent of one another. A summary of the seven areas, the "end-states' or careers they might lead to and a prominent person proposed by Gardner to exemplify each type of intelligence, follows.

1. Linguistic - sensitivity to the meaning and order of words; poet, translator (T S Eliot)
2. Logical-mathematical - the ability to handle chains of reasoning and to recognize patterns and order; mathematician, scientist (Einstein)
3. Musical - sensitivity to pitch, melody, rhythm and tone; composer, singer (Stravinsky)
4. Bodily-kinesthetic - the ability to use the body skillfully and handle objects adroitly; athlete, dancer, surgeon (Martha Graham)
5. Spatial - the ability to perceive the world accurately and to recreate or transform aspects of that world; sculptor, architect surveyor (Picasso)
6. Interpersonal - the ability to understand people and relationships; politician, salesman, religious leader (Gandhi)
7. Intrapersonal - access to one's emotional life, the means to understand oneself and others; therapist, social worker (Freud)

In his highly regarded book *Frames of Mind* Gardner goes beyond the theoretical by providing psychological evidence that each of the seven intelligences exists as a discrete entity. It is this body of material, based on his own research in neuropsychology at the Boston Veterans Administration Medical Center, that lends the theory its strongest credence.

Gardner provides numerous examples of patients who have lost all language abilities as a result of damage to the speech centers in the left hemisphere of the brain, who nevertheless retain the ability to be musicians, visual artists, even engineers. Most musical abilities appear to be located in the right hemisphere, and thus injuries to the right frontal and temporal lobes cause difficulties in distinguishing tones. He points out that lesions in certain areas of the left hemisphere dramatically affect logical and mathematical abilities.

To buttress his claim for separate bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, Gardner describes patients whose linguistic and logical capacities have been devastated, but who show little or no difficulty in carrying out complicated motor activities. He cites numerous case histories of patients with right hemisphere injuries who have difficulties with spatial representation and other visual tasks; meanwhile, their linguistic abilities remain intact.

Even for the elusive personal intelligences, there is supporting neurological data. While lobotomy causes little damage to those intellectual abilities measured on an IQ test, the ruinous impact of this surgical procedure on various aspects of the personality is well known.

"I started out thinking that intelligence would break down according to the senses—visual, auditory and so on," Gardner said in a recent interview, "but my study convinced me it didn't work that way. My methodological principle is to look at the mind through a lot of lenses—development, breakdown, cross-cultural material, evolutionary data. And these different lenses all support the existence of multiple intelligences."

Since the publication of *Frames of Mind* in 1983, Gardner's theory has attracted extraordinary attention from both the academic world and the education establishment. A symposium on M.I. theory held last year at the University of South Carolina was attended by scholars from across the country. Educational journals regularly feature articles on Gardner's ideas. But the most unexpected testing ground for his theoretical work materialized in the fall of 1985, when eight Indiana schoolteachers approached Gardner with an audacious plan to start a public school based on the theory of multiple intelligences.

ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1989, 150 students arrived at a nondescript building in downtown Indianapolis to take part in a unique educational experiment: a school devised to develop the wide gamut of intelligences identified in Gardner's M.I.theory. What made this theory so attractive to the eight founding teachers was Gardner's belief that while everyone is born with certain strengths and weaknesses in each of the cognitive areas, all people are capable of developing greater proficiency in *all* of them.

The Key School, as it was named, covers a rigorous curriculum devoted to the three R's. This is required by Indiana law, which also mandates periodic standardized testing of all students in these subjects. In a traditional school that would pretty much sum it up. But at the Key School the daily schedule of every child also includes music, art and physical education—four times the exposure children usually get to these subjects.

And every day there is instruction in Spanish and computers (Federal "magnet" funds have allowed the school to hire eight additional teachers.) A detailed report card evaluates each child in the seven intelligences and provides a far more precise profile of his or her abilities than a conventional report card.

In Room 25 one day last winter, 22 highly concentrated little violinists are eagerly honing their musical intelligence to the tune (or somewhere vaguely near it) of "Frosty the Snowman." In Room 15 teacher Beverly Hoeltke is on the floor, surrounded by a noisy but disciplined group of first, second and third graders exercising their logical-mathematical intelligence. By moving small blocks into circles of varying sizes they are discovering the deeper connections between addition and multiplication: four plus four ends up with the same result as four times two.

In Room 17 Carol Forbes is demonstrating the difference between a small triangle and a large circle—in Spanish—a lesson that combines exercise in both the linguistic and spatial intelligences. In the gym a noisy bunch of kids are playing backboard dodgeball, little realizing, as they gleefully try to bean one another with a large ball, that they are developing their bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

Intelligences run amok in Room 10 where a two-month-long schoolwide effort has produced a spectacular recreation of a tropical rain forest. Wildly colorful papier-maché birds of paradise, parrots and butterflies stare down from the forest canopy at pumas and various primates, which in turn gaze down upon the exotic denizens of the forest floor.

In addition to this splendid manifestation of spatial intelligence, there are charts, graphs and carefully researched reports pinned to the wall giving information on creatures as diverse as tuataras, golden eagles and toucans, demonstrating that the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences have not been neglected. The cooperative nature of the project attests to the involvement of the two personal intelligences. Meanwhile, a high level of musical intelligence is revealed in the taped background music, a composition called "Train in the Tropical Forest" written and performed by three upper- graders. It is a remarkable work, filled with unconventional sound effects reminiscent of the composer George Crumb.

It is hard to remember that this is not a special school for gifted children, but one whose racially and ethnically diverse population is chosen entirely by lottery, with more than a third of the students qualifying for free or reduced-price school lunch.

In its third year of operation, the Key School shows every sign of being a runaway success. Scores on standardized tests show that the two intelligences most valued in our educational system are thriving. Only five children in the entire school failed to reach the acceptable level mandated by the school district. Principal Patricia Bolanos also reports: "The test scores reveal that we are diminishing the gap between the achievement levels of our black students and our white students, and it certainly is not because the achievement levels of the white students are diminishing."

Parental enthusiasm, always a litmus test of a school's well-being, is high. "I can't say enough good things about the Key School," says Marilyn Altom, mother of Crystal, who graduated last year, and Alexandra, a second grader. Art teacher Kathy Ann Calwell says, "Crystal Altom was a child who definitely could have been lost in the cracks. She wasn't good in spelling or math or any of the academic areas. But she just flowered, right before our eyes. And in the process of growing confident about her art and music and theater, the other areas got stronger. "

IN RECENT YEARS HOWARD Gardner's attention has moved from establishing the multiple intelligences to the more practical area of testing. With David Henry Feldman, a psychologist at Tufts University, he is involved in Project Spectrum, an assessment program that measures a far greater range of abilities than IQ tests do. Indeed, it has been designed to touch on all of the seven intelligences. Spectrum evaluates a child's skill over a period of time in the familiar environment of the class-room, and gives a written report on his or her strengths and weaknesses. It is already in use at the Healey School in Somerville, Mass.

The Educational Testing Service, the very institution that administers some of the nation's most widely used standardized tests, has begun to acknowledge the need for change. Drew H. Gitomer, a research scientist at E.T.S., says "There's a growing recognition that the traditional assessments don't accomplish all that can be done and in certain ways work against educational objectives." E.T.S. is collaborating with Gardner on another alternative assessment program, Arts Propel, which is developing new ways to evaluate children's work in the arts in a number of Pittsburgh public schools.

As the education establishment faces the need for reform, Gardner's ideas are frequently cited. The Education Commission of the States, which serves as a policy resource for the nation's governors, finds his work a promising model. Rexford Brown, the commission's director of communications, says, "Gardner's work has been important in attacking the monolithic notion of intelligence that has undergirded much of our thinking. We are beginning to see that education is not meant merely to sort out a few children and make them leaders, but to develop the latent talents of the entire population in diverse way."

Gardner's ideas are not without their critics. Sandra Scarr, a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, looks on M.I. theory as an example of "faulty optimism that leads to dead ends in both theory and practice." She calls it a "lumper theory in which everything good in human behavior is called intelligence."

Robert Sternberg of Yale observes that a person deficient in one of Gardner's cognitive areas, music intelligence, for example, is not thereby mentally impaired in the way a person lacking in verbal or reasoning skills would be. Sternberg describes Gardner's theory as "a theory of talents, not one of intelligence." He explains, "An ability is a component of intelligence when we cannot get along without it, and a talent when we are not noticeably handicapped by its absence."

Nor is everyone in the education establishment sanguine about Gardner's influence. Chester E. Finn, chairman of the board of governors of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a Federal testing program, sees this influence as both "good and bad." "The good part," he says, "is the perception that people who aren't very good at one thing can be very good at another and that there are multiple ways of evaluating performance of any given task.

"But his ideas can be turned to ill effect," he continues. "You hear people saying it's all right if kids don't get the right answer as long as they're creative in their approach. But is that good? I firmly believe that every young American ought to have some idea of who Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln are, and I don't care whether their greatest strength is playing the ukelele or skating backward on the ice."

In his latest book, *To Open Minds*, Howard Gardner defends himself against such critics, and expresses a respect for tradition and basic skill development together with the encouragement of creativity in the classroom. As he concluded an interview in his office at Project Zero, he emphasized the value of a more humanistic view of intelligence. "I believe that as long as we have a narrow definition of intelligence—a very scholastic definition—most kids are going to think they're stupid, and they're going to miss the fact that they may have a lot of abilities that could be important vocationally and avocationally. Enlarging the concept of intelligence, and realizing that people may not have the school intelligence but may have other equally important ones—I think that would be an enormously valuable thing to happen."

Gardner pauses and then adds with a smile, "M.I. theory is not the last word. I'm trying to shake things up and pluralize things a bit. To think that there is a last word is what's wrong with most intelligence theorists."

Marie Winn, author of* The Plug-In Drug*, writes regularly about child development.

Reprinted from THE GOOD HEALTH MAGAZINE of* The New York Times*, April 29, 1990. It is to be noted that some educators who work with the children of the poor and other minorities do not see Gardner's theorizing as potentially beneficial to their students. See Dave Lehman's scholarly article questioning Gardner's work in Volume I of* Challenging the Giant*. Dave Lehman is the long-time principal of the Alternative Community School, in Ithaca, New York whose writings about his teaching and his school appear starting on page 83 above.

REVIEWS

Six Alternative Education Periodicals:

Home Education Magazine
Growing Without Schooling
Rethinking Schools
Holistic Education Review
National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools News
Lib Ed

(Addresses for subscriptions listed at the end of the article.)

I have been reading from each of these magazines to glean a brief comparison of these different magazines/journals that are coming from the core of the educational alternative community. The similarities of purpose and scope of these magazines, that of airing and addressing the needs, ideas and concerns of people involved with alternatives to stagnant public schooling, outweigh the differences. In reading through a couple of issues of each of these magazines, I was impressed with the depth and breadth of topics that were covered. And yet there is something that each one of them adds to an inquiry into an overall perspective on this subject of learning which is unique. Having said that, let me speak a little about each one.

Home Education Magazine is an excellent resource primarily geared for homeschoolers, but in my opinion for anyone who is open to learning as an innate sharing, loving, pulsing, *alive* and mutual experience. As a parent and a teacher, I found it rich with connections, ideas of great things to do, book reviews, letters, articles and editorials that offer the larger perspective on learning and education which I lose sometimes in the day-to-day teaching and parenting that I do. There is a large, annotated Resources section and many letters from homeschooling kids and adults that share very personally the joys and the worries involved. One unique part of *Home Education Magazine* is the section called 'Kids' Pages' with very specific projects, connections (the World Youth Video Exchange), Jokes and Riddles, Trivia Quiz and other features to read and/or do with your kids. Great reading

Growing Without Schooling is also mostly for homeschoolers, but has a different format from that of *Home Education Magazine*. The best way I can describe it is that it is *very* interactive—almost entirely letters from homeschoolers in response to previous letters or for sharing with readers. It is a real linkage newsletter—very personal and immediate, some articles from other publications, all the correspondence clustered into general categories in the index on the cover and just packed with experiences! It also has an order form for the wonderful resources available from 'John Holt's Book and Music Store' and a comprehensive directory of subscribers (i.e. a lot of other homeschoolers) that is kept right up-to-date. This is a real networke, as well as being deeply committed to John Holt's vision about learning.

Rethinking Schools is a journal for teachers, parents and students to voice their concerns about the Milwaukee area public school system. I want to quote from its stated goals because it is in looking at these that I see value for many of us all around the U.S. and internationally.

> We encourage our readers to join us in our discussions and debate on educational issues, including the following:
>
> 1) How can parents, teachers and students gain more powerful roles in determining school policies and practices?
> 2) What must be done to overcome the significant racial, gender and class inequities which prevent many students from receiving an equal and effective education?
> 3) What specific approaches can teachers use to empower students within the classroom and the community? How can we make meaningful community based work experience an integral part of each child's education?
> 4) What can we do to insure that multi-cultural and anti-racist education takes place?
> 5) What creative and peaceful methods can we use to resolve conflicts among students, and conflicts between students and teachers?
> 6) What specific teaching techniques and materials have proven successful in our efforts to motivate students?

The issue of the journal that I read had excellent articles concerning racial inequities in school curriculum and attitude. The lead article was called, 'Toward a Vision of Curriculum that Builds on Students' Strengths'—and there were many following articles sharing the innovative, intuitive and open ideas of teachers who are clearly 'going for it!' It was beautiful reading their stories! The issue also included an annotated bibliography of American Indian literature, a student page of prose and poetry, and some wonderful tongue-in-cheek cartoons. Again, this journal adds another facet to a whole perspective on education and learning.

The NCACS News is a networker like GWS with articles mostly covering activities and events specific to the coalition. It has news from all around the States and the world as more members explore, and more countries find out about the coalition. The articles come from students and adults. It has necessary notes and agendas from conferences, board meetings and office info, as well as letters and a column for people looking for teachers or jobs in alternative/free school settings. The international connections that have been happening and reported on in *The NCACS News* are what I see as unique here—the last issue reported from Japan, France, Australia, Mexico; and Editor Rosalie Bianchi—who is also a long-time teacher at The Free School in Albany—reports that she has gotten correspondence from Zimbabwe, Africa!

Lib Ed, a British magazine for 'the liberation of learning' is not just about schooling. It is an in-depth look at the struggles in England for less coercion, authoritarianism and elitism in education. The magazine is 21 years old, written by a collective, and obviously is a necessary voice in England, judging from what I read about some of the proposals about education that are being put forward by the present government. There is a great deal in *Lib Ed* that spoke to the -isms'—racism, sexism, classism. Some of the articles I had trouble relating to because they seemed so theoretical and heady, but my difficulty may be lack of a historical perspective on their different culture. The magazine has some wonderful reviews of alternative schools and programs, a great resource section, and book reviews.

Finally, *Holistic Education Review* is a new (*at the time this review was written*)and fantastic journal with articles that look whole-heartedly at 'holistic education.' While I had never used that term, I certainly have been a part of the process that is described in one of the articles I read:

> ...The focus of holistic education is on relationships—the relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body, the relationships between various domains of knowledge, the relationship between self and Self. In the holistic curriculum the student examines these relationships so that he/she gains both an awareness of them and the skills necessary to transform the relationships where it is appropriate (page 11, Vol. 1, No. 2).

Many of the articles look at the relationship of education and educational models to society and then seem to follow the pulse that I see as so necessary in real education—the pulse that goes between teacher and student, that flows within teachers as individuals and that flows within students/young people as individuals. (I have trouble with the label 'student' as applied to those between the ages of 2 and 18, because the essence here is that we are all students! But for lack of a better word...).

There are articles from schools that are models of holistic education, there is analysis of terms such as 'success', 'freedom' and 'alternative'—and there are book reviews. This is excellent, thought-provoking reading for individuals and groups.

Reading in all of these gave me food for thought in a big way and also returned me to the feeling that we have a great deal of experience and questioning to share with each other, and in that sharing, we can grow, change, return and continue to renew ourselves.

Holistic Education Review, 39 Pearl St., Brandon, VT 05733-0298.
Lib Ed, The Libertarian Education Collective, The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Leicestershire, LE17 5HL England
National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools News,
Rethinking Schools, P.O. Box 93371, Milwaukee, WI 53202
Growing Without Schooling, 729 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116
Home Education Magazine, P.O. Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855

The reviewer, Betsy Mercogliano, has been a co-director as well as a long-time teacher at The Free School in Albany, New York, is now a midwife and is writing a book about her experiences.

FOUR REVIEWS FROM *HOLISTIC EDUCATION REVIEW:*

WHAT ARE SCHOOLS FOR?

by Ron Miller
175 pp., $18.95, qpb. Holistic Ed. Press,
39 Pearl St., Brandon. VT 05733-1007

What keeps America from being the land of democracy, humankindness and plenty we keep singing about? Must we continue to blame our shortfall on 'those people' (fill in the blank) who make attainment of our ideal impossible of achievement, in spite of all our good will and best efforts? Is it possible for us to 'wake up' and begin to look—really look—at our values? Can we make a start, at long last, in the painful process of uncovering the truths about 'us' both wonderful *and* horrifying—and everything in between?

Here is a book which makes a splendid beginning to that process by giving us an extraordinarily balanced, varied and well-documented account of our American social, religious, economic and political beliefs and policies in terms of their impact on our perennial educational system. Ron Miller, (past) editor of *Holistic Education Review*, has clearly devoted a great deal of time and thought to this scholarly yet eminently readable account of the complex interrelationships among the many themes which go to make up the 'temper of the times' at any historical period of our history and the educational system which reflected those themes. Some of these themes, Miller points out, run throughout our history, like the moralism of the 'Protestant ethic,' the dogma of capitalism which grew out of the industrial age, the perennially limited nature of our democratic way of governance, limited by our blind exclusion of various 'out' groups such as blacks, women, children and immigrants, and the dogma of 'scientism' which forms the basis of mainstream assumptions about the nature of reality and undergirds both our educational philosophy and our curricular policies in the field of education, to the patently disastrous outcome for our children with which we are presently struggling.

Miller's proposed solution to our national educational dilemma is, in a sense, to fit the cure to the disease—which translates into the twelve-step process which has begun to play such a significant role in the lives of our 'failures,' people whose lives have so clearly come to a grinding halt through alcoholism, divorce, drug addiction, personal unhappiness, chronic illness and a host of other ills—in a word, our sins—

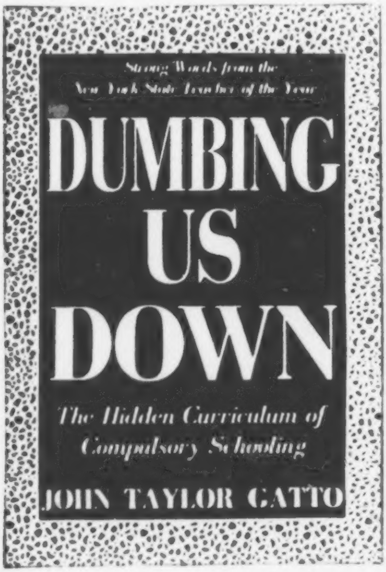
which is that only acknowledgment of our failures can even begin to give us the 'space' to set things right—which means that we must 'bite the bullet'—we must begin by telling the truth! As the Zen saying goes, the teacup must be empty before it can become full. But equally important in this process is our willingness to acknowledge dependence—interdependence upon one another, and our ultimate dependence upon a higher power. Like Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods, and was condemned for his hubris by being chained in perpetuity to a rock with an eagle eating his liver, we need to learn to recognize the need for genuine humility and gratitude for our lives and for our home, the planet.

DUMBING US DOWN: THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

by John Taylor Gatto

**Published by New Society Publishers (4527 Springfield Ave.,
Philadelphia, PA 19143),1992;104 pages, $9.95 paper.**
Reviewed by Ron Miller

This is a collection of keynote speeches John Gatto has given in 21 states as New York State Teacher of the Year, 1991.



John Taylor Gatto's fiery speech to the New York legislature, upon being named the state teacher of the year, was reprinted in several publications and widely circulated among alternative and radical educators, making Gatto an immediate hero within the alternative education movement. That speech, along with four other essays, are brought together in *Dumbing Us Down*, a book that should further establish Gatto as the most visible contemporary critic of public schooling. Like Paul Goodman, John Holt, Herb Kohl, Jim Herndon, and Jonathan Kozol in the 1960s, Gatto is a morally sensitive and passionate teacher who is thoroughly disgusted by the spirit-crushing regimen of mass schooling, and unafraid to say so. Both Kohl and Kozol are still writing important books that present a progressive/radical critique of schools, but Gatto (like the late John Holt) gives voice to a growing populist rebellion against schooling as such. Whether this rebellion will support or counteract the holistic education movement is an open question, to which *Dumbing Us Down* may offer some clues.

One thing must be said up front: Gatto is a superb essayist. His writing is not academic or pedantic, but a model of harnessed passion. He builds his argument carefully and smoothly and then unleashes bold attacks that cut right to the core of many problems of modern education. He clearly has a solid understanding of the historical foundations of modern education, but generally makes his own personal interpretations rather than citing sources or scholars. Indeed, his essay "The Green Monongahela" is an intimate account of his own life and how he became a teacher. He tells a simple story from early in his career, of rescuing a young Hispanic girl from the stupid injustice of the system (she later went on to become an award-winning teacher herself), that captures the essence of his moral crusade against institutional schooling.

Gatto summarizes his argument in an introductory chapter:

> Was it possible I had been hired not to enlarge children's power, but to diminish it? That seemed crazy on the face of it, but slowly I began to realize that the bells and the confinement, the crazy sequences, the age-segregation, the lack of privacy, the constant surveillance, and all the rest of the national curriculum of schooling were designed exactly as if someone had set out to prevent children from learning how to think and act, to coax them into addiction and dependent behavior.(p. xii)

In his speech to the legislature, he makes this charge explicit, describing seven "lessons" that form the heart of the compulsory curriculum.

> "These are the things you pay me to teach":
>
> 1. Confusion. "Everything I teach is out of context. I teach the un-relating of everything." (p. 2)
>
> 2. Class position. "That's the real lesson of any rigged competition like school. You come to know your place." (p. 5)
>
> 3. Indifference. "Indeed, the lesson of bells is that no work is worth finishing, so why care too deeply about anything?" (p. 6)
>
> 4. Emotional dependency. "By stars and red checks, smiles and frowns, prizes, honors, and disgraces, I teach kids to surrender their will to the predestined chain of command." (p. 7)

5. Intellectual dependency. "Of the millions of things of value to study, I decide what few we have time for, or actually it is decided by my faceless employers.... Curiosity has no important place in my work, only conformity" (p. 8). Gatto says this is "the most important lesson, that we must wait for other people, better trained than ourselves, to make the meanings of our lives." (p. 8)

6. Provisional self-esteem. "The lesson of report cards, grades and tests is that children should not trust themselves or their parents but should rely on the evaluation of certified officials. People need to be told what they are worth." (p. 11)

7. One can't hide. Surveillance is an ancient imperative, espoused by certain influential thinkers (such as Plato, Augustine, Calvin, Bacon, and Hobbes). All these childless men ... discovered the same thing: children must be closely watched if you want to keep a society under tight central control." (pp. 11-12)

And here is the crux of Gatto's critique: In the past 125 years, social engineers have sought to keep American life under tight central control. Compulsory schooling is a deliberate effort to establish intellectual, economic, and political conformity so that society can be managed efficiently by a technocratic elite. "School," claims Gatto, "is an artifice that makes....a pyramidal social order seem inevitable, although such a premise is a fundamental betrayal of the American Revolution" (p. 15). Along with the media— especially television, which Gatto criticizes harshly in another essay—schooling removes young people from any genuine experience of community, any genuine engagement with the world or immersion in lasting relationships. It robs them of solitude and privacy. Yet these experiences are what enable us to develop self-knowledge and to grow up "fully human," argues Gatto, and he asserts that our most troubling social pathologies, such as drug abuse and violence, are the natural reaction of human lives subjected to mechanical, abstract discipline.

Gatto insistently calls for a return to genuine family and community life by rejecting the social engineering of experts and institutions. In a particularly powerful passage, he rejects the notion that a "life-and-death international competition" threatens our national existence, as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) warned. Such a notion is "based on a definition of productivity and the good life' that is 'alienated from common human reality.' True meaning is genuinely found, Gatto writes,

> ....in families, in friends, in the passage of seasons, in nature, in simple ceremonies and rituals, in curiosity, generosity, compassion, and service to others, in a decent independence and privacy, in all the free and inexpensive things out of which real families, real friends, and real communities are built.... (pp. 16-17)

And these are the things we have lost in our hierarchically managed, global empire-building society.

In the essay 'We Need Less School, Not More,' (*included in this volume, ed.*) Gatto draws a sharp distinction between true community (in which there is open communication and shared participation) and institutional networks (which value the individual only in terms of the institution's particular goals). A network cannot be a healthy substitute for family or community, Gatto argues; it is mechanical, impersonal, and overly rational. Schooling is a prime example of this:

> If, for instance, an A average is accounted the central purpose of adolescent life—the requirements for which take most of the time and attention of the aspirant—and the worth of the individual is reckoned by victory or defeat in this abstract pursuit, then a social machine has been constructed which, by attaching purpose and meaning to essentially meaningless and fantastic behavior, will certainly dehumanize students, alienate them from their own human nature, and break the natural connection between them and their parents, to whom they would otherwise look for significant affirmations.' (p. 62)

This is a brilliant, radical critique of the nature of modern schooling. Gatto has certainly earned his heroic stature with his deeply insightful observations into the very essence of what public education has become. His writings deserve to be pondered seriously by holistic teachers and can contribute a great deal of insight and energy to our work.

Nevertheless, there is a fundamental issue at stake here, which could end up sharply dividing the holistic education movement if we do not sensitively address it. Gatto, like John Holt and a great many homeschoolers, holds and defends a *libertarian* social philosophy; in the John Locke/Adam Smith tradition. Gatto argues that a common (social) good arises only out of the free interaction of individuals and intimate communities pursuing their own local good. Individuals and families are seen as the primary human reality, while social forces are generally treated as a distressing nuisance. (The term 'social engineers' seems to include anyone who seriously addresses social issues.)

In the spirit of dialectical discourse (honest disagreement leading to a more inclusive synthesis), which Gatto admires and knows to be the heart of genuine education, I wish to oppose the libertarian position with one that is more socially conscious. I am especially sensitive to the nuances of this question, since I spent several of my intellectual formative years as an enthusiastic student of libertarian philosophy and political theory, and still have a great deal of sympathy for it. Gatto is justified in calling for a genuine community life—to replace the stultifying power of the state, huge corporations, self-serving experts and professionals, and all impersonal institutions. Like other libertarians and homeschool advocates, however, Gatto throws the baby out with the bathwater by categorically defining 'school' as an impersonal network and virtually equating educators and activists with 'social engineers.'

The problem is illustrated vividly in the book's closing essay, 'The Congregational Principle.' Here Gatto lauds the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts Bay for organizing their churches and towns largely free of higher authority, thereby bringing about local solutions to social and political questions. He explicitly recognizes the parochialism inherent in such radical localism: He discusses the towns' practice of banishing people whose religious views or personal qualities were discomfiting to the community, and he even acknowledges that dissidents (such as Quakers) were publicly humiliated and whipped (a few were also executed). Gatto's main point in relating this story is to celebrate the fact that New Englanders eventually evolved to a more open, liberal worldview—without compulsory schooling or social engineering.

But Gatto's historical interpretation is flawed by his libertarian bias and is quite unconvincing: He asserts that the colonists enjoyed 'nearly unconditional local choice' in a social 'free market' (pp. 90-91)—a strange claim to make for a rigidly moralistic society with a single established church! Gatto claims that New England culture was transformed by 'something mysterious inside the structure of Congregationalism.' (p. 90) (read: Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' that magically turns self-interest into common good). But this utterly ignores the distinctly social events that forced New Englanders to alter their parochial culture in the early decades of the nineteenth century—the nationalistic impulses released by the War of 1812 (which New Englanders had bitterly and futilely opposed); Irish Catholic immigration; enlightenment and romantic movements; the rise of science, industrialism, and urban centers; and the growing tensions between North and South over trade, tariffs, and slavery. More important, it doesn't bother Gatto in the least that the liberalization of New England culture took two hundred years and probably would have taken far longer had these crucial societal events not intervened.

Libertarian thinking is a much-needed antidote to the hierarchical, mechanical power that has been amassed by social institutions in the twentieth century. We surely do need to pull the plug on these monstrous organizations. But that is not all we need to do. We live in a society that is poisoned by inequality, racism, and grossly materialistic values. We live on a planet that is threatened with biocide within the next decade or two. We simply do not have two hundred years to wait for some "invisible hand" to lead individuals and families and self-satisfied little communities to begin addressing these tremendous issues! We must find a way to incorporate personal and communal independence into a social movement that recognizes our interdependence.

As I see it, this is exactly what holistic thinking attempts to do. Holistic educators are not "social engineers"—we reject the compulsion and fragmentation and alienation of public schooling as earnestly as Gatto—but we recognize that the modern crisis demands a concrete response grounded in certain moral, philosophical and spiritual principles. Holistic politics—otherwise known as the Green movement—explicitly embraces decentralization and personal empowerment, but within the context of severe social and ecological problems that need to be addressed. In a society of blatant inequality, how will the "free market" provide quality educational opportunity for poor children? In a society driven by addicted consumerism, how will families, on their own, deal with environmental devastation, media brainwashing, or corporate control of resources and jobs? These are problems of a social dimension, not solely a personal one. Getting rid of compulsory regimentation in school is an important part of our task, but by no means is it a panacea that will restore our society to some golden age of free people and whole families. A holistic response—not an atomistic one—is required.

The point of contention is this: Is a school necessarily an "artifice" as Gatto calls it, an impersonal network, an agent of coercion and social engineering? Or is it an organic social creation that can serve a wide variety of moral purposes, from totalitarian indoctrination to complete human liberation, depending on the predominant values of the larger culture? I hold the latter view. Compulsory, authoritarian schooling is a symptom of our social and cultural sickness, not its cause. Genuine individuality and community are purged from schools for the same reason they are so difficult to find in families today: The larger society is driven by mechanistic, reductionistic, competitive values. But holistic educators—from Johann Pestalozzi to Rudolf Steiner to progressive and whole language educators—have argued that a school can be a nurturing community, a place where young people and their families might find respite from the oppressive forces of society. Radical educators—from John Dewey and George Counts to Herb Kohl and Paulo Freire—go further, and assert that school can be an active agent of social renewal and reconstruction by empowering young people to think critically and act cooperatively against the forces that oppress them.

The value of Gatto's position is to raise a crucial question: Can public schools—government-run schools—ever truly embrace a holistic or radical pedagogy that threatens the existence of the power structure itself? Steiner raised this question. So did Holt. So does legal scholar Stephen Arons (1983). My own respect for libertarian thinking leads me to take this as a very serious and fundamental question, which holistic and radical educators often overlook. I don't know the answer to it. Here is where the dialectic, the dialogue, between libertarians and holistic/radical social activists needs to begin.

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Arons, S. (1983). *Compelling belief: the culture of American schooling*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

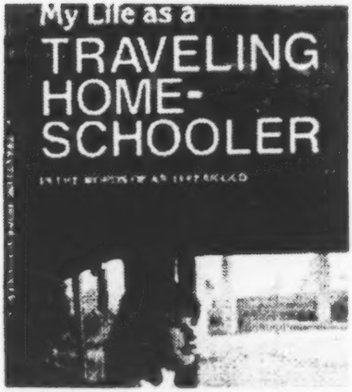
National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983) *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: Author.

***Ron Miller, founder and former editor of* Holistic Education Review, *has also written* What Are Schools For—Holistic Education in American Culture [See review above] *and* New Directions in Education: Selections from Holistic Education Review, *and has contributed several articles to* ΣΚΟΛΕ.**

MY LIFE AS A TRAVELING HOME SCHOOLER

by Jenifer Goldman

95 pages, pb, $12.95; Solomon Press,
417 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 1.577, 1991:



Eleven-year-old Jenifer Goldman starts out by telling the reader, "Through most of my life school's been pretty miserable." Fortunately, Jenifer has an uncle, Jerry Mintz, who is probably the most knowledgeable and active advocate for alternative education in the United States, and he agrees to take her with him on his travels to educational conferences and meetings in Canada, Virginia, Montana, Texas, California, and points between Jerry and Jenifer meet an assortment of people—ranchers, Baha'is, Native Americans, Europeans, teachers, and homeschoolers—and they visit museums and schools. The author concludes that her homeschooling experience enabled her to make more friends than she would have made in schools and she says, "Learning while traveling sure beats sitting in an old classroom any time, or sitting around the house.... You get to explore the world and what it really is." The book includes photos.

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NELLIE DICK AND THE MODERN SCHOOL MOVEMENT

a video by Jerry Mintz

"Nellie Dick and the Modern School Movement" offers a rare and intimate glimpse into an important educational movement of the past. As we listen to this remarkable 96-year-old woman describe her experiences in anarchist schools of the 1910's and 1920's we realize how many of the issues we struggle with today are perennial educational questions. Alternative and humanistic educators today, who advocate both greater freedom and responsibility for young people, will learn how Nellie Dick and her colleagues worked out this delicate balance. Those who resist the conservative tide of "cultural literacy" and obsessive standardized testing will be inspired by the passionate idealism of the Modern School people; they believed that people learn from the time of birth irrespective of our efforts to teach them what we think they should know—and their faith in the learning process was borne out by the creativity and joyful learning of their students.

***Review by Ron Miller, Editor: reprinted from* Holistic Education Review**

**Jerry Mintz and Nelly Dick—
This photograph and the one of
Jenifer Goldman taken by Jerry Mintz**

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ONE FROM THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION VIEWPOINT:

THE CLOSING OF THE AMERICAN HEART:
What's Really Wrong With America's Schools,
by Ronald H. Nash, Probe Books, 1990.
reviewed by Mary Leue

Professor Ronald H. Nash, graduate of Brown University and Syracuse University, has been teaching philosophy and religion for more than twenty-five years at Western Kentucky University, and has written or edited twenty books on topics of concern to American Christians, such as *Faith and Reason, Poverty and Wealth* and *Social Justice and the Christian Church.* Dr. Nash is a well-read person and an informed scholar of the history of ideas. This book is an excellent source of information for anyone interested in the educational viewpoint represented by a representative of the informed apologetics of the mainstream, conservative American Christian Establishment. In the course of presenting his argument for the importance of asserting the existence of Divine Revelation in the workings of human life and culture, Nash offers what to me is a trenchant exegesis of both the current crisis in education and what he believes to be its origin in the history of American culture and the institution of education as a reflection of that culture.

Here, I believe, is a book well worth reading by alternative educators as a resource for analyzing and understanding the degree to which alternative and Christian educators may view the education issue from a common perspective, for the purpose of clarifying their own particular conclusions arising from their diagnosis of the problem. Common problem, differing solutions. The difference lies in what each group sees as the meaning of the symptoms being described. The fact that Professor Nash's conclusions may differ quite radically from those of some—perhaps even most—of us alternative educators is, for me, less relevant than that we clearly understand ourselves and others who are facing the same problems—the same symptoms of something seriously amiss—yet are apparently arriving at vastly divergent views of its cause, and hence of its cure. Sure—problems are to be solved—but if we as mutually injured Americans can work together through mutual understanding, we can all gain, it seems to me.

Still another possible benefit to be gained from Professor Nash's book: if the charge sometimes made against alternative education that it is anti-academic—or even anti-intellectual—has any merit, here's a book which may help us to fill in an incomplete informational data-base in the on-going story of the history of education in our country, as told by a lively, informed and principled believer in his own values. I for one feel that I have gained a great deal from reading it.

It's funny, but I hesitate to detail the argument laid down by Nash here, for fear of triggering off latent prejudices in my readers who might be sensitive to code words like "secular humanism," "relativism," "moral illiteracy," and the like. These terms have been used by the radical right wing of the Evangelical Christian establishment to rationalize and reify their own no-nothingism, spiritual arrogance and defensive orthodoxy by thus labeling—and, by implication condemning—anyone who fails to hold as reality the ideal life centered in family, church and school which is represented by that fundamentalistic word view. Nash himself calls this kind of defensiveness "spiritual ghettoism," seeing it as the result of a feeling of such entrenchment as to preclude any balanced view of the "world out there."

My worry would be a similar one concerning "us"—that fearing a sense of isolation, perhaps even of moral weakening, from the pressure of the educational establishment and its apologists may sometimes have the effect of keeping us from understanding - let alone respecting -the thinking of those who may radically disagree with us. I'd really like to hew to the view that a book can never be judged by its cover, but only by the quality of its contents—in this case, the quality of the educational experience of every child and every teacher in every school, whatever its title.

ONE FROM *THE GUARDIAN*:

SAVAGE INEQUALITIES,

by Jonathan Kozol

Kozol: Kids damned to 'Savage Inequalities

Schools solution is simple—throw money at the problem

by Steven Wishnia

In 1965, Jonathan Kozol was fired from his job as a fourth-grade teacher in Boston for "curriculum deviation"—reading poems by Langston Hughes and Robert Frost that weren't in the official syllabus.

Death at an Early Age, his book about his experiences in the city's ghetto schools, depicted an educational netherworld: classes held in a crumbling auditorium, with one child nearly decapitated when a jerryrigged blackboard collapsed; ancient, racist textbooks; teachers who dismissed the children as hopelessly ignorant, and a frail, disturbed 8-year-old beaten in the basement almost weekly by teachers with bamboo whips.

Twenty-five years later, Kozol returned to U.S. schools to write a new book, *Savage Inequalities* (recently published by Crown) and discovered that things have gotten worse.

"We've not only failed to live up to Brown" (the Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation decision), he says. "We're not even up to Plessy," the Court's 1896 'separate but equal' ruling. "Our schools," he adds, "are more separate and more unequal."

Reagan's malign neglect

There is less overt racism in schools today, Kozol told the *Guardian* in an interview before a recent lecture at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. "Teachers tend to be far more sensitive to issues of cultural diversity," he said, and the increasing numbers of Black and Latino teachers and administrators have also helped sensitize white teachers. But racism has made a "terrifying resurgence" in the rest of the country, and the federal government "completely turned its back on poor people" in the '80s.

Schools and the children now have to contend with the devastating legacy of the Reagan era's malign neglect: crack, homelessness, pollution and lack of health care outside the schools, and all the ills brought on by fiscal starvation inside.

In East St. Louis, Ill., a 98 percent Black city so poor it had to eliminate municipal garbage collection, Kozol found schools with no toilet seats that had to close several times when

Jonathan Kozol as Hero, Seated on a Very Large Rock, and Robed in his Impeccable Business Suit, Gazing Afar—
(Why, I'm not Sure, But Isn't it a Splendid Image?)

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raw sewage backed up into the halls. In Chicago, two sixth-grade girls fight over a crayon. Their school rations pencils, paper and crayons to keep from running out in the middle of the year. It sends students to a high school where more than three-quarters of the students drop out.

In the Bronx, he found a high school where the roof leaked so much that a waterfall rushed down the stairs every time it rained. Camden, N.J., schools had antique typewriters but no computers to teach word processing, no books for a ninth-grade writing class and seven badly ripped copies of *A Tale of Two Cities* for an llth-grade English class of 10.

A 14-year-old East St. Louis girl commented that naming a junior high school after Dr. Martin Luther King, when the "school is full of sewer water and the doors are locked with chains," was "like a terrible joke on history."

"There is nothing I can say that is as damning as what the children say," Kozol told the Stony Brook audience Sept. 12.

Education for the poor

The differences are drastic when compared with the suburban schools he also visited: in Princeton, N.J., where the high school had 200 IBM computers and a Dow Jones hookup to study stock transactions, and New Trier High School in the Chicago suburb of Winnetka, often cited as the best public high school in the United States.

There is little in *Savage Inequalities* that would shock anyone who's ever spent time in inner-city schools. Yet few solutions are on the agenda of politicians or mainstream media, who usually blame parents, teachers or individual administrators for children's failure to learn.

Kozol doesn't believe that having large numbers of children with crack-addicted or alcoholic parents is a valid excuse for schools to fail. "The justification for public education is that regardless of what else is happening in a child's life, the school can make a difference," he says. If public schools can't, they shouldn't exist. We should just close them up and not pretend that we're educating poor children."

Dual system exists

There is a simple solution, he says: money. If New York City schools had the $15,000 per pupil that top-rated districts in affluent suburbs spend each year—instead of half that amount—class sizes could be cut by half.

"A teacher who is good with 40 kids is super-good with 20," he says. "A mediocre teacher who has an awful time with 40 kids might manage to do a pretty good job with 20."

If city schools had suburban-size classes of 18 children, he continues, there would be "no need to filter out the one or two boys who cause trouble. In a class of 35, the two or three boys who cause you trouble screw up the whole school day for everyone else" because the teacher doesn't have time to give them the attention, affection and discipline they need.

"I don't want to take 200 IBM computers from the kids in Princeton," he told the Stony Brook crowd. "I want to give the kids in Camden 200 Apples." He got the most applause when he urged abolishing the inequitable system of financing schools through local property taxes.

Most of the commonly suggested solutions to the schools' crisis—"magnet" and alternative schools, more choice for parents in picking schools and all-Black-male schools—are sidestepping this main issue, according to Kozol.

He reluctantly supports the all-Black male schools proposed in Detroit, Milwaukee and Brooklyn, N.Y.: He's "philosophically opposed to any official sponsorship of segregation," but says that since many schools are all-Black already and the troublesome students who get shunted into their special-education classes are overwhelmingly male, why not revamp the curriculum, put in some resources, "make it something terrific and call it an African-American immersion school."

However, he says, the real issue is "why this society permits segregated schools and why it permits them to be so unequal." The only truly integrated schools he found were in Jackson, Miss.—and the most segregated were in New York City. But he contends that if New York's schools had as much money as their suburban neighbors, white parents wouldn't send their kids to private schools, and segregated classes wouldn't be an issue.

Though he also says he is a "great believer" in alternative education, he has reservations about the public alternative schools springing up in several cities, like Central Park East Secondary School in New York's East Harlem. He lushly praises the East Harlem school's director, Deborah Meier, but doesn't think the experiment—a network of smaller, less impersonal schools specializing in different subjects—can be replicated successfully in other places.

Because parents have to make special efforts to get their kids into both alternative and selective "magnet schools," he says, they tend to "filter out the most needy children while serving as a magnet for the more fortunate." The most sophisticated parents—middle class, white or Black—can get their children into these schools, while poorer parents often don't know how to ask or can't get their kids in. This, he warns, means that poorer children are left in schools drained of the most active, outspoken parents and their kids—perpetuating the "dual system."

Bush voted against civil rights

The same argument underlies Kozol's opposition to the Bush administration's push for "choice" between public and private schools in its "America 2000" report—except that the Bush plan isn't even inspired by good intentions, he says. The idea that free-market competition would force bad schools to improve is worthless without the money to buy adequate supplies and pay enough to attract good teachers, he argues. The "segregation academies" that opened in the South in the aftermath of the Brown decision also emphasized free choice, he adds and it's not a coincidence that Bush voted against the 1964 civil rights bill as a member of congress.

Outraged innocence

"I was a victim of 'political correctness,'" he adds. "I never heard of Langston Hughes until some Black parents told me about him, and I majored in English and American literature at Harvard."

Kozol, who says he was apolitical before he started teaching, calls himself "an eternal optimist"—and retains the outraged innocence of '60s politics. "I persist in believing there are an awful lot of decent people in America," he says. "It's still worth making a straightforward ethical appeal."

"You know the argument you always hear for Head Start: We ought to do this because it's going to be cost-effective. If we help these kids it'll save us money later on?" he continues. "I don't like that argument. It's true. It would be cost-effective. But I think we ought to do these things because they're decent."

***Reprinted From* The Guardian**

Jonathan Kozol has been a voice crying in the wilderness of American heartlessness and a passionate advocate for the children of the poor for lo! these many years! Unlike a number of other educational reformers who began their work during the sixties, Jonathan still speaks for those same forgotten victims of our race-class system and our bureaucracy. He is my heart brother!

Yeah, I guess he's also sort of "prejudiced" toward the people who perpetrate these horrifying injustices, but he's also speaking his painful truths in the face of virtually universal indifference! So I hope he keeps it up! The prophetic tradition is a very hard one to follow. God bless, Jonathan!

ONE FROM SUDBURY VALLEY PRESS:

A NEW LOOK AT SCHOOLS,
by Dan Greenberg,
Sudbury Valley School Press, 1992. $7.00
2 Winch St., Framingham, MA 01701.

Here's a run-down of *New Look*'s chapter headings:

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
The Continuing Crisis in American Education

PART I VALUE SYSTEMS AND EDUCATION
1 Culture and the Value System
2 Cultural Pluralism in the United States
3 The American Value System
4 Learning
5 The Maturation of the World View

PART II CULTURAL STYLES OF LIVING

6 Defining the Pre-industrial Culture
7 Defining the Industrial Society
8 Stabilizing the Industrial Culture
9 Tensions Inherent in Industrial Culture
10 The Post-industrial Life Style

PART III LOOKING FORWARD

11 Raising Children in the Post-industrial Age
12 The Need For a New Type of School
13 Transition Schools
14 Education Beyond Schools

A FINAL NOTE

APPENDIX A
Publications of The Sudbury Valley School Dealing with Educational Theory

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

The Role of Play at Sudbury Valley School

This appendix is given below in its entirety, because I consider the topic of play to be uniquely important, and because there are so few schools—at least, among those taken seriously by the educational establishment—that regard child's play seriously as a necessary basis for all subsequent learning!

And because Dan's account comes so eloquently from his own warm heart that it is a pleasure to read—unlike some of the more academic parts of the book. Well, that's my bias. Do get the book! He's right on, you know! And Sudbury Valley really does do what Dan says it does.

THE ROLE OF PLAY AT SUDBURY VALLEY SCHOOL

Day after day, month after month, a village was slowly taking shape before our eyes. Spread out over a large table appropriated from the art room, the plasticene model almost seemed real.

Often, six or more kids at a time would be huddled over the table for hours, chattering away, as they tried to create perfect miniature replicas of everything they could think of. Horses, trees, cars, trucks, animals, fences, people—everything. Not just any old replicas, but flawless reproductions. There was, for example, a complete "motor" under the (detachable!) hood of every automobile, the whole of which could easily fit into my hand. People finger-high had clothes and features. Roofs had tiles, walls had doors, interior rooms had tables and chairs.

All was made out of plasticene, worked and rolled and modeled and formed. It was a big game. The game lasted over two years. No one suggested even remotely that these children, aged eight to fourteen (mostly boys), were "doing" art, for example. The idea would have offended them. No staff help was asked for, none was given. To the participants, it was play. Serious, concentrated, play, great fun without limits.

Every generation at school seems to have its serious "clubs." It usually starts at around nine or ten years old, with an occasional younger hanger-on tolerated, and lasts a year or two for each new group. There is a club, and of course a clubhouse. At first that was an old ramshackle hut in the woods, until that

All Ages Feel Free to Swing Together at Sudbury Valley!

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fell down. Later, it was a room in the stables. Then it was a large closet in the main building. Still later, when that was off limits because of fire regulations, the clubhouse could be any "secret" area enclosed, if necessary, by imaginary walls and roof. Furniture had to be spirited into it — an old rug, perhaps; a chair; a table. Rituals had to be invented, plots and plans hatched, spies launched, guards posted. A world of intrigue would be created, filled with complexity. The kids involved were always busy, always terribly concentrated.

Play at school is serious business. I think play is always serious for kids, as well as for adults who haven't forgotten how to play. Professional educators are often troubled by play, mostly because kids devote energy and intelligence to play that far exceeds what they put into schoolwork. Occasionally, to make things more palatable, educational psychologists will write about the value play has in "learning"—for example, in learning motor skills, or learning creative problem-solving, or something else with a label that sounds legitimate.

The fact is, play is a big part of life at Sudbury Valley. And it is one of the prime factors of learning here. But what is learned is a different lesson than you might think. What is learned is the ability to concentrate and focus attention unsparingly on the task at hand, without regard for limitations—no tiredness, no rushing, no need to abandon a hot idea in the middle to go on to something else. This "lesson" is retained for life.

Most of the kids at school, especially the younger ones, are too busy playing to eat or rest all day. By late afternoon, they are ready for a huge meal and a good night's sleep. They've worked long and hard.

As elaborate as the play is, the tools and equipment needed are, to understate it, inexpensive. When we first were preparing to open the school, we spent long hours allocating our small budget to all sorts of "necessary" play equipment, especially for little kids. We started with the usual collection of stuff you can find in nurseries, kindergartens, and child recreation centers. As the first years unfolded, we watched in disbelief. The equipment lay almost entirely unused. Much of what was handled was put to wholly different uses than those for which it had been intended.

The chief equipment the kids use is the chairs, the tables, the rooms, the closets, and the outdoors, with its woods and bushes, rocks and secret corners. The primary tool is their imagination. After twelve years of lying around and occasionally being added to by donations, about three-quarters of the play stuff was put into boxes and stored in the attic. There it sits. The attic is dry, so it will probably last a long time up there.

There are some exceptions. Older kids play board games that they bring in from home: "Monopoly," for days at a time. "Risk," a fad that lasted four years, and turned the players into geographers and military strategists. And "Dungeons and Dragons," of course, with each player's elaborate collection of accessories carefully assembled and privately owned. I guess "D & D" was more tolerable to outsiders than most games, since in it people "learned" things—about medieval life, for instance.

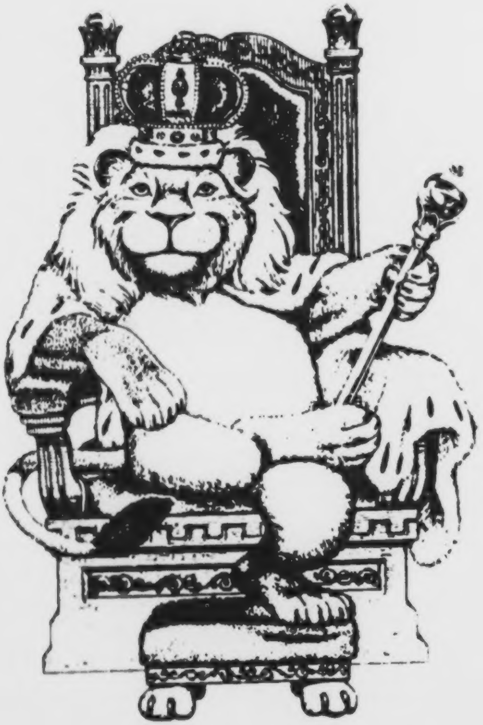
We take play seriously here. We wouldn't dream of interfering with it. So it flourishes at all ages. And the graduates who leave school go out into the world knowing how to give their all to whatever they're doing, and still remembering how to laugh and enjoy life as it comes.

Some of Dan's other books:

***The Sudbury Valley Experience*, 1985.**
***Child Rearing*, 1987.**
***Free at Last: The Sudbury Valley School*, 1991.**

ONE FROM ICA PUBLISHING:

Look, it would be presumptuous of me to review Carlos and Jana's superb new book. They can do it a lot better. So, instead, I decided to give you numerous, pregnant quotes. Read them prayerfully! The only thing to be added is that this is a delight to look at as well as very informative to read! I'll give you one sample of the art work, to whet your appetite! This is Carlos' image of a school superintendent!



SCHOOL DROPOUTS: THE TRAGEDY OF AMERICA'S UNDEREDUCATED YOUTH,
by Carlos Bonilla & Jana L. Brazda
pb $29.95, 1993, ICA Publishing
1020 N. Commerce, Stockton, CA 95202

Carlo-quotes:

It is a lot more beneficial
for humanity and
this great nation
and a lot less expensive
– I may add –
to educate than
to incarcerate

—Carlos Bonilla [illegible]

Chapter 11
WHY DO STUDENTS DROP OUT?

" The teacher, she screamed at me and called me stupid ".

—Luis, an immigrant student from Guatemala, dropped out at age 11 while in grammar school. Committed suicide less than a year later!

This, of course, is the crucial question to be asked and the one to which effective answers must be found.

The 'Experts', and this includes psychiatrists, psychologists and school counselors, have over the years advanced a myriad reasons for the school dropout problem. Since, we ourselves, do not qua,ify as any of these it behooves us to let those whom we consider **THE REAL EXPERTS:** that is, the students themselves tell us why it is that they drop out.

Based on their reasons and comments each one of us can then surmise what the problems are and propose potential solutions to curtail this tragedy:

- *'To prevent dropouts, I feel the parents should be educated on how to give support to their children ';* F.L., 18, Senior At Valley High School, Sacramento, California.

- *'My friend dropped out when she started high school. She was pregnant. She lived behind Raley's (Grocery Store) in a dumpster for a while. I don't know where she is now';* B.D., 15, Bella High School, Sacramento, California.

- *'If I had finished school, I know I'd have a better job. I'd feel better about myself';* T.C. 23, Dropped out of Pioneer High School (San Jose, California) at 16.

- *'Basically, school got real boring for me; They don't have classes that let you breathe, let you do something different';* W.D. A gifted student who dropped during his junior year, now a successful entrepreneur; (San Francisco, California)

- *'I always wanted to graduate; I wanted to go through the ceremony. that was my regret - that I didn't graduate, that I blew it';* S.R., speaking from a cell at San Quentin Prison, California.

- *'Not being able to read - It's embarrassing; I went through a lot of that. I never flunked a grade, but I never had any passing scores. I remember getting F's most of the time. I figured if they don't care, why should I? '* J.V.D., 23, dropped out at 16 when a sophomore.

- *'I was too smart for school; I don't think I made one clear decision during the time I was a student';* S.J., 23, dropped out at 17, now a successful businessman in California.

- *'I don't want my daughter to end up like me. I want her to go to school and like school and get a good education';* K.S., 23, dropped out as a junior.

- *'It is too easy to quit';* S.R.R., 24, dropped out during the senior year.

- *'I've found it so often: If you say dropout, automatically people don't want to talk to you';* D.Q., 22, left as a junior, now a successful businessman, San Jose, California.

- *'It seemed like they (the teachers) didn't really care. Everything was on my own. I didn't have nobody to look up to';* H.S., 23, quit as a sophomore; now a construction worker.

- *'My life is like a paradox. I dropped out of school because I had to get a job. Now I can't get one because I dropped out of school';* J.L.G., 18, dropped out as a junior.

- *'While I was in school, I was encouraged to have goals like going to college; but when you're out on your own, the people who were giving those goals aren't there anymore. That's when* *you have to face reality';* L.O., 18, dropped out at 17; unemployed, Fresno, California.

- *'School just wasn't interesting. They didn't make me want to stay there. If I was there, I didn't do anything just kick back and talk';* B.C., 19; dropped out as a junior, at 17.

- *'Teachers weren't willing to teach; they wouldn't pay any attention to you. Just give you assignments and not offer much help. I needed more attention and more enthusiasm from the teachers. If they had made learning fun, maybe I would have stayed';* Lisa, 17, dropped out as a sophomore. Now an unemployed welfare mother.

- *'School is boring; They teach you about the past. Nobody wants to hear that. You want to hear about the present';* C.P., 18, dropped out as a junior; New York City.

- *'They get less understanding from the school system because they don't speak English well';* H.C., 15, a black student at manhattan's M.L. King, Jr. High School, describing the problems Latino students encounter in New York's schools.

Well, there we have it friends, the real experts have spoken and now you be the judges; what are some possible solutions to the problems students have with:

Uncaring, insensitive teachers
Teen pregnancy
Boring curricula
Large, impersonal classrooms and schools
Inattentive school systems

Furthermore, how should we better reward those teachers who do care, are sensitive to students' needs and generally do a fine job under trying circumstances—day in and day out?

Carlo-quote:

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

IN CHICAGO, OVER 46% OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS SEND THEIR OWN CHILDREN TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS?

CHAPTER 14

A Raft Trip Down the Education River

(A Fable)

So it came to pass that a sturdy log raft was floating down the mighty waters of the Education River. And on this raft were four people from the public schools: A superintendent, an assistant superintendent, a principal and a student.

And it also came to pass that on the river banks there was a multitude of parents, uninvolved, merely observing and while a few would wave—this was done half-heartedly, without energy.

And in a flimsy, frail looking and-not so sturdy-canoe, there was a group of teachers, and their aides, waving frantically, trying to get the attention of those in the log raft, but....to no avail, they just didn't seem to care...and, as their canoe was overtaken by the raft, they overheard this conversation....

Superintendent: *'The problem is that we never have enough money to do the job'* to which the assistant superintendent thus responded: *'While you, almighty one, may be correct, this is only partially so, for the real problem is that we lack enough administrators to do the job;'* and now the principal spoke saying: *'While both of you, oh powerful ones, may be somewhat correct, I can truly say my problem is that not enough of your wealth filters down to my domain to do the job. '*

After a very long pause and much reflection, the student said:

'While what you old fools are saying may have a glimmer of truth in it, the problem—as I see it—is that the three of you

have forgotten the system was created for us, the students, not for the enrichment and empowerment of your kingdoms.'

Then, a strange thing happened! Upon hearing this, the other three approached the student and dumped him overboard. Upon seeing this, the multitudes on the river banks were angry, saddened and in their ire they ranted and raved and clenched their fists. But, it was too late. The student drowned!

Back at the canoe, the teachers and the teachers' aides shook their heads in disbelief and cried and cried disconsolately!

Moral: A teacher, a teacher's aide, and a parent with their hands on the tiller are always needed to balance the situation in the raft.

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GLOSSARY

Educrat: A member of the highly paid public (K-12) education bureaucracy or—better said—of the public school aristocracy.

NOW, LISTEN CAREFULLY EDUCRATS

Here is your lesson for TODAY:

1. Remove This Obfuscating Terminology From Your Vocabulary:

Site-Based Decision Making
On Site-Based Management
Measurement-Driven Instruction
Child-Centered Education
Shared Decision Making

2. Then, Memorize and Use These Terms Instead:

Common Sense-Based Education
Ethics-Based Administration
Student-Oriented Curriculum
Caring, Nurturing-Based Environment
Interesting/Thought Provoking-Based Teaching
Skills-Based Training

3. Finally, Learn This One 'Till You Can Recite It By Heart:

Administrator-Based Fiscally Responsible Management

OK— NOW, CAN YOU DO IT???

****

The very high incidence of school dropouts, throughout the nation, is viewed as one of the major factors contributing to the failure of the American educational system; the dropout problem affects not only the schools but our society as a whole.

Consider:

- dropouts lack the skills necessary to attain gainful employment, thus, they are more likely to rely on the welfare system for simple survival. This affects every taxpayer in the nation.
- teen-age pregnancy is highest among school dropouts; conversely, pregnant teen-agers are most likely to drop out of school.
- a relationship exists, although not a direct one, between gang-related activity, drug and alcohol abuse, criminality and the dropout rates.
- decreased productivity by businesses relates to a dwindling pool of literate, skilled high school graduates.
- recent studies indicate that male dropouts are three times more likely to possess and carry handguns than students remaining in school.

The National Center for Education Statistics' recent report (September 1989) on the U. S. dropout rates underscores the seriousness and magnitude of the problem; nationally, only about two-thirds (2/3) of students enrolled go on to finish high school. In the New York City school system alone, more than 60 percent of the 300,000 students failed to qualify for a high school diploma within four years.

For minority students (Hispanics, Blacks) the dropout rates can be as high as 54 percent (Boston Hispanics) and 39 percent (New York Blacks) in some school districts; indeed, for the Hispanic and Black populations the school dropout problem is nothing less than a **NATIONAL TRAGEDY!**

Stockton, California
February, 1991

Carlos A. Bonilla
Jana L. Brazda

Q.R.G.
(Quick Reference Guide)

TO
SCHOOL
DROPOUTS
(1983- 1991)

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
(ICA, Inc.)
1993

INSTRUCTIONS

The Quick Reference Guides (QRG) published by ICA, Inc. are designed to provide efficient and rapid access to published material in education (K- 12) and other areas of national interest.

References in the QRG are numbered consecutively and arranged in chronological order:

82. *Dropout Darwinism: School Counselors Helping The Fittest, Abandoning The Rest;* Parsons, C.; Los Angeles Times, July 2, 1989.

83. *Tuning In To The Needs Of High School Dropouts;* Becker, G.S.; Business Week; July 3, 1989.

They are further broken down into specific sections:

The Hispanic Dropout Problem:
A Matter Of Concern For Us All

165. Make Something Happen: Hispanics and Urban High School Reform; Hispanic Policy Development Project, New York, 1984.

How Officials View the Obstacles Facing Hispanics, Their Opportunities, and the Outlook for the 1980's; Hispanic Policy

Development Project, February 1984, Vol. I *Moving Into the Political Mainstream.*

Which include each publication's source:

Newspapers & Magazines

1. Dropping Out: The Once and Future Crisis;
Thompson, B.; Christianity Today, October 17, 1986.

2. *Dropping Out;* Burnett Strother, D.; Phi Delta Kappan, December 1986.

Books

288. *Our Children & Our Country: Improving America's Schools & Affirming the Common Culture;* Bennett, W.J., Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Reports

119. A Nation af Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform; National Cornmission On Excellence in Education; U.S. Dept. of Education, 1983.

In addition, a list of associations and information on how to contact them, is provided:

306. Accrediting Commission For Schools 1606 Rollins Road Burlingame, Ca. 94010 (415) 697-7711

307. American Association for Adult & Continuing Education 1201 16th St. N.W.; Suite 230 Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 822-7866

Finally the QRG is also indexed according to author, in alphabetical order.

So, please take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the guide's layout; in doing so, you will save a lot of time which is, after all, the primary goal of the QRG series.

QRGs are an extremely valuable source of information for individuals who:

- Are doing graduate work
- Writing doctoral dissertations
- Preparing speeches and seminars
- Obtaining specific credentials and certification
- Preparing course outlines and handouts

And for agencies or individuals involved in:

- Grant proposal writing
- Annual contract reports
- Establishing policy
- 'Lobbying' for specific causes

Thank you,
Carlos A. Bonilla, President ICA, Inc.

Hey, these are just a few golden nuggets from this treasure chest! Get it! If Carlos is out, The Lorax, 20 Elm St., Albany, NY 12202, also has it!

STUDIES

JOSEPH M. RICE, UPTON SINCLAIR, AND THEODORE SIZER: THREE TOURISTS AND WHAT THEY SAW IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

by Lois E. Kenick

An examination of issues raised by respected observers of American education since the 1890's brings to mind the passage from 'Ecclesiastes' (I:8-10), 'What has happened will happen again, and what has been done will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun.' This paper will examine the issues raised by three fairly ambitious studies: Joseph Meyer Rice in 1892 and 1893, Upton Sinclair in 1921-1922, and Theodore Sizer in 1981-1982. While there are many more studies available; for example, Conant, Silberman, Goodlad and several government efforts, these three were chosen for their time in American education and for the principal researchers, men who differ greatly in training and perspective.

In 1892, Joseph M. Rice, under contract to*The Forum* magazine, traveled to thirty-six cities from Boston to Washington and from New York to St. Louis. The purpose of his tour was to prepare a firsthand, objective assessment of American public education and report his findings in a series of articles in *The Forum*, a monthly magazine of a generally progressive persuasion. The articles were collected and the results of a second tour, undertaken in 1893, were added in a book, *The Public-School System of the United States*, published in 1893. Rice, trained as a physician and fresh from two years in Germany studying psychology and education (Good, 1962, p. 397) carefully defined his terms, stated his criteria and described his methodology, then spent ten chapters describing what he saw and relating it to his statements. His first trip took five months during which he observed over 1200 teachers at work and did interviews and observations in twenty teacher training institutions.

Rice stated a three part purpose for his tour: (a) to learn what methods of instruction were commonly used in classrooms; (b) to determine the general conditions which prevailed in schools; and (c) to determine the manner in which the schools of different cities were managed, hoping to discover the causes of the difference in quality of schools of different places. To do this he disregarded reports published by school officials, discarding them as political documents and frequently misleading ones at that. He relied instead on his own observations of classroom instruction and school board meetings, on study of by-laws and regulations, and on interviews conducted with superintendents, principals, teachers and other knowledgeable people. (Rice, 1893, p.2) His classroom observations were conducted along specified guidelines to facilitate comparison. He looked at the appearance of the room, the attitude of the teacher toward the child, the teacher's conduct of a recitation, the nature of seat work, and the answers to twelve questions asked of the teacher about the scope of her work, the teachers' meetings she attended and what she did to improve her mind. Rice described his basic criterion as what each teacher was required to do to keep her position as opposed to being impressed by what individual teachers were willing to do of their own accord, and he described his writing perspective as presenting the child's side from a position of advocacy. (pp. 5-7)

From his observations Rice concluded that there were four factors and three laws which influenced the conduct of schools. He also described three general classes into which all the primary schools he visited could be cast. Although he visited grammar grades (four through eight), he excluded them from his conclusions because of differences in content areas taught. (Rice, p. 218) Apart from brief comments on unhealthy conditions in some New York City and Cincinnati schools and a remark on the welcoming aspect of plants in an Indianapolis schoolroom, Rice's classification of school conditions focused on what teachers did with children. His three classes were, antiquated-mechanical, awakening and advanced. School systems were cast into these categories on the basis of the extent to which new or scientific education practices were used in the system's classrooms. antiquated-mechanical systems used them hardly at all; awakening systems used them somewhat; and advanced systems worked from the start with a focus on ideas and the natural relationships of one subject to another.

Rice's differentiation between old education and new education as used by awakening and advanced schools may be summarized as follows:

Old education is mechanical, crowding into the memory of the child a certain number of cut and dried facts.	New education is scientific, based on knowledge of the development of the child; its aim is to lead the child to observe, reason and acquire manual dexterity as well as memorize facts.

School exists simply for the purpose of giving the child information. It disregards the manner in which minds acquire ideas, so teachers make no attempt to study or understand the needs of the child and therefore instruction is limited to cold, harsh drilling of facts memorized from texts.	School exists to develop the child in all his faculties, intellectual, moral & physical. The teacher is guided by the nature of a child's minds and the laws of natural development and therefore studies the child in order to meet his needs. Instruction is from a loving and sympathetic friend and guide.
Schoolroom has a prison aspect.	Schoolroom is as a refined and refining place.
Learning is drudgery and the schoolroom is a place of bondage.	The child is interested in his work, and the schoolhouse is a place of pleasure.
Emphasis is upon results and the child is ignored.	Emphasis is upon the growth of the whole child.

(Rice, pp. 20-23)

……

Having decided which schools were good for children and described their conditions, Rice turned his attention to the elements which affect the attainment of those conditions. He postulated three laws which if observed would lead to good schools and which, if ignored, would lead to all the mechanical, demeaning classrooms he deplored. Briefly stated, they are as follows:

1. The school system must be absolutely divorced from politics in every sense of the word. Board members must be free to act in the interests of the child. Whenever partisanship or selfishness gets in, especially in the appointment of superintendents and teachers, evils accumulate.

2. Supervision of schools must be properly directed and thorough. By 'properly directed' Rice means aimed at increasing the professional competence of teachers through meetings for study and observation for coaching in the application of techniques studied. Supervision aimed to ensure results by the periodic examination of classes makes 'automatons of teachers and pupils.'

> 3. In order for schools to advance, teachers must constantly try to grow in both professional and intellectual strength. (Rice, 1893, pp. 17-18)

Rice's point seems to be that teachers make the schools, but superintendents largely make the teacher, and the power to appoint both superintendent and teacher lies in the hands of the board of education. Therefore, parents must insist on securing conscientious boards and able superintendents.

He elaborated on factors within those laws by describing four elements which interact in the ignoring or observing of his three laws by a school system:

> 1. The public at large must have intelligent interest enough to follow the actions of the board, superintendent and teachers. It must seek knowledge for itself of the development of children. Pride in local schools founded neither on knowledge of what is going on nor on knowledge of the science of education is a very bad form of interest in the schools.
>
> 2. Selfish or political motives on the part of members of the board of education lead to self-serving conduct of the affairs of the school district. The means of selection of the board of education must be one which makes it accountable to the people whose children it cares for.
>
> 3. The superintendent is the central figure of the school system. What he is and what he does and what conditions he works under are the reasons for the schools being as they are. Four factors directly affect the superintendent and the quality of the schools he directs: (a) his knowledge of the science of education, (bl) the extent to which he trains his teachers in the science of education, (c) the extent to which he receives the support of the board of education, and (d) the number of schools for which he is responsible.
>
> 4. Teachers are the greatest factor. Earnestness, conscientiousness and enthusiasm are no substitute for thorough training and continual updating of skills and knowledge. Great mischief is done in schools where teachers are appointed for political or selfish reasons on the part of the board of education.

words, nine-tenths of the people who controlled public education came from one-sixth of the population. (Sinclair, 1924, p. 369) Sinclair presents this as conclusive evidence that business controlled education and ran it to serve the interests of business.

Another issue raised by Rice and again by Sinclair is that of teacher preparation. Their perspectives differ, but the connection can easily be made. Rice's viewpoint is that teachers make the schools and, therefore, ought to be thoroughly trained and regularly updated in learning theory and classroom applications. He observed that where teachers studied their craft and were assisted in that study by superintendents, the classrooms were conducted more along scientific principles and were a better place for children to be. Sinclair places the onus on a different sector saying that teachers have neither time nor incentive to improve, and some who do work at it have been rewarded with censure or dismissal. Both researchers put part of the blame on management; however, Rice goes lightly over entry level qualifications in most instances and concentrates on the role of supervisory personnel and inservice training. Sinclair goes after the policy level of management, essentially dismissing supervisors as puppet-executioners.

In support of his contention, Sinclair raises four points which Rice does not discuss in presenting teacher qualifications as a major issue. Sinclair cites three studies, each of which adds a prop to his analysis. A National Education Association bulletin showed that of 600,000 public school teachers, one quarter served two years or less, and fully half served five years or less. If teaching is viewed as a stop-gap occupation, argues Sinclair, teachers have no reason to improve their knowledge of teaching. A National Chamber of Commerce survey taken in 359 cities in 1919-1920, showed that while the salaries of male elementary school teachers had increased 33% in six years, the cost of living had increased 104% in the same period. Sinclair uses those figures to emphasize once more that self-serving businessmen keeping the tax rate down were ruining the schools in the process. His point is that no one would bother training for a job in which they could not get ahead. Finally Sinclair uses a member survey taken by the National Council of Teachers of English to show that even people who knew their subject couldn't teach it properly because of workload and teaching load. He describes workload as school paperwork and record keeping required of teachers but not related to subject matter, and he describes teaching load as number of pupils and the hours major thrust was school management, and he included no observations at all of classroom techniques. So it is in the area of management that the conclusions of the two researchers must be examined and compared. On at least one point there is unequivocal agreement: in order for America's schools to improve, politicians must be removed from positions of control. Rice speaks in vague terms of selfish political motives on the part of board of education members; Sinclair speaks specifically of kickbacks, favoritism and graft, but their issue is the same. There is further agreement on a corollary to that issue in that both Sinclair and Rice call upon the American people to study their schools and see to it that educational policies are in the hands of capable and conscientious people.

Further emphasizing his focus on management in support of his contention that Big Business has taken over education, Sinclair pursues three major themes throughout *The Goslings*: (a) the interlocking directorate idea developed in *The Goose-step* (Sinclair, 1922), (b) business and professional men controlling school boards, and (c) the strings attached to educational grants from major corporations. To illustrate his first point Sinclair names a group, 'The Black Hand,' identifying its members as a dozen or so bankers and businessmen. These men associated in such organizations as the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association and many civic clubs and were, according to Sinclair, able to agree upon a course of action to their benefit and to control events to achieve it. He identifies Black Hands in the major cities of his study and shows how they reached into the boards of education. In general, every Black Hand is described by Sinclair as composed of bankers, manufacturers, newspaper owners and business-men. Sinclair goes on to show professional or familial connections between the Black Hands of different cities. He draws quite a web and paints a grim picture of collusion and self-serving. His third point seems to be merely an extension of these concerns with a more specific focus.

For each city that he reports on in detail, Sinclair gives the composition of the local board of education, often naming the individuals, always citing their affiliation—manufacturing, real estate, etc. He moves from this to illustrations of graft and favoritism which have brought about poor conditions in the school buildings or in the teaching. In summary he offers the results of a study published by Scott Nearing in *School and Society* of January 20, 1917. Nearing had surveyed 131 cities with populations in excess of forty-thousand and had received responses from 104. Of the 967 school board members reported, 433 were businessmen and 333 were professionals; in other

Rice's work was done in a spirit of investigation. To be sure his evaluations were set in a bias for the things he had seen in Germany, but his documentation is methodical, and his classifications proceed from his observations. His writing is largely detached and descriptive, punctuated from time to time with a laudatory or deploring comment. Sinclair, in the introduction to the *The Goslings*, states that the purpose of his journey was to show how Big Business has taken over the schools, how they got their power, how they used it and what that means to America's children. (Sinclair, 1924, p. ix) His writing style is polemical and at a constant scream pitch, if writing can be said to scream. His examples, usually stated oratorically, are seldom completed or explicitly substantiated.

There was, throughout the preparation of this paper, a temptation to dismiss Sinclair as a screaming, soap-box propagandist; however, at least three barriers were raised across that escape. The first two barriers related to Sinclair's habit of meticulous research as demonstrated in two tests of his published work. In the first test federal investigators reporting initially in secret to President Theodore Roosevelt confirmed enough of Sinclair's allegations about the meat packing industry to stimulate passage of the Meat Inspection Bill in 1906. (Yoder, 1973, p. 43) The second test is reported by Floyd Dell, Sinclair's friend and biographer. He reports that although Sinclair named names in his accusations in *The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism*, he was never taken to court for libel by members of a profession in which such action is common. (Dell, 1927, p. 164) The final test, by no means as convincing as the first two, is that several storage boxes of material collected by Sinclair during the research for the two books on education await the determined researcher at the Lilly Library of Indiana University in Bloomington. (Gottman, 1963)

Having begun with his conclusions, Sinclair uses his observations, interviews and correspondence to substantiate them. He repeatedly cites the composition of boards of education (industrialists, businessmen, bankers, real estate dealers, politicos) and proceeds to show how they turned the business of the schools to their own interests. Among his frequent examples are the poor, even unsanitary and dangerous, condition of public school buildings, textbook adoption and purchase deals with favored suppliers, harassment even to dismissal of teachers for political stands and union activity, and the hiring and promotion of board relatives and toadies.

Rice looked at classroom conditions and examined school management as only one of four influencing factors. Sinclair's

Rice's second trip, undertaken for five weeks in the spring of 1893, had a narrower agenda. He visited schools in Indianapolis, Minneapolis, St. Paul and Cook County specifically to test third year pupils in sight reading and arithmetic. He also collected from all grades first drafts of written compositions on topics of the students' choice. His book includes examples of the work from the third and eighth year pupils in these systems, which he had earlier described as advanced. He presents them as further evidence for his conclusions (Rice, 1893, pp. 239-308), but since no work from schools in other classifications was included for comparison, the section seems weak.

From all this defining, observing and refining it becomes clear that Rice saw rote recitation of textbook lessons as a poor substitute for education, which he saw as the use of ideas to develop a child intellectually, morally and physically. He saw three major issues to be dealt with at the local level: (a) improved initial training of teachers and a regular program of updating the skills of inservice teachers, (b) providing competent supervisors in sufficient number to ensure the growth of teachers toward positive goals, and (c) removal of schools systems from the political arena. In short, Rice's contention seems to be that teachers make the schools, but superintendents largely make the teachers; and the power to appoint both superintendents and teachers and provide the necessary resources for them to succeed lies in the hands of the boards of education. He sees it to be the duty of the public at large and parents in particular to insist on securing conscientious boards and able superintendents. He further contends that the continued existence of mechanical schools are a result of the corruption and selfishness of school officials who allow friendship, business or politics to determine the appointment and discharge of superintendents and teachers. He finishes with the contention that this corruption and selfishness was allowed through the 'unjustifiable ignorance and criminal negligence of parents.' (Rice, 1893, p.26)

In 1921-1922, Upton Sinclair conducted research on the condition of education in America. He conducted an extensive literature search and interviewed over a thousand people in twenty-five cities. He also published his findings in book form, in two books, in fact: *The Goose-step* in 1922 about higher education, and *The Goslings* in 1924 about local, public school systems. In Sinclair's twenty-five cities were ten which had been visited by J.M. Rice thirty years before. There, except for some conclusions about the major issues, all similarities between Rice's work and Sinclair's end.

required to read their papers in a useful manner. (Sinclair, 1924, pp. 369-374)

Sinclair's fourth point impacting on the issue of teacher quality is the status of teachers. Throughout the book he cites examples of teachers harassed for political stands or even research into politically sensitive areas, the hot issues of the day being Bolshevism and unionization. His implication is that the conditions of wages, workload and second class citizenship conspire to drive away quality teachers and teacher candidates. On this second issue, then, Rice has sought to describe and Sinclair has sought to explain, but both agree on the issue of teacher quality as a major factor in the improvement of America's schools.

A connection between Rice's findings and Sinclair's findings can be drawn on at least one more issue, the learning actually demonstrated by students. Again, Rice draws conclusions from personal observation and Sinclair cites reports as well as referring to an occasional interview. Rice, focusing on primary schools, reports that he found the reading and expression of ideas to be far superior in those schools where reading and writing were taught incidentally on the principle of unification than in those schools where reading and writing were taught mechanically as separate subjects for their own sakes. (Rice, 1893, p. 224) He also comments that periodic examination of the pupils' skills when used as a means of evaluating teacher performance has the end result of turning both teacher and pupils into automatons. (p. 17)

Sinclair uses occasional incidents reported in interviews to lament what young people were being taught by their grown-ups' behavior. In a chapter titled, "The Educational Mills," he describes the strict and mechanical discipline in schools in Philadelphia, Nebraska and San Diego to illustrate the general character of schools operated according to the principles of great contemporary educators. He then cites some reports to indicate the success which he claims is typical of how well pupils in those schools succeed in learning. One of the reports, from the *New York Times* of July 22, 1923, describes a current events contest examination in Tennessee in which 28% of the high school contestants did not know the governor's name, but 100% correctly identified Babe Ruth. (Sinclair, 1924, p. 379) Thus, however weakly, both researchers have raised the issue of what and how well the students are learning, the issue of educational outcomes.

Rice and Sinclair were limited by the constraints of their day: Rice by the eastern readership of his sponsoring journal, Sinclair by personal funds. Both traveled by train and were limited by the accessibility of interviewees and data. Had either of these men had the use of less limited funds, telephones, computer data banks and airplane travel, their sample and their conclusions might certainly have been affected. In 1981-1982, Theodore Sizer had all of these resources and more. Sponsored by the National Association of Secondary Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools, with funding by six foundations including the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the study in which he took part spanned five years, employed five authors and twenty research assistants, and produced three books of which *Horace's Compromise, The Dilemma of the American High School,* (Sizer, 1984) is one.

In 1981-1982, Theodore Sizer, participating in the project, "A Study of High Schools," visited over forty American high schools in seventeen states. His research staff did extensive field work in fifteen of those schools and collected written data from others. Their stated purpose was to try to understand the American high school by observing specifically the triangle of students, teacher, and the subjects of their study. (Sizer, 1984, p.4) In the book that Sizer wrote from his findings, he tried to make general points about high schools while conveying a "feel" of them to lay readers. His bias, quite similar to Rice's, was his humanistic view of schools as a place to develop the whole child. From his focus on the three parts of the triangle he moved necessarily to an additional examination of parents and management.

The only one of the three researchers to spend much thought on the students, Sizer presents some interesting conclusions about the clientele of the American education system. He makes frequent mention of their docility, points out that it has a long history (Rice and Sinclair both point to discipline that produces it), comments that students are seldom docile outside of school, and generally deplores it. He also assigns the cause of it about equally to parents, teachers and administrators. His keywords are "expectation" and "incentive." Sizer frequently puts forth the ideas that adults do not credit adolescents with much capability so hold low expectations of them for performance, that schools uniformly provide few incentives for adolescents to perform and in fact frequently punish creativity, and that a kind of social contract is being observed in which students exchange docility for the comfort of going unchallenged. Sizer calls this last a "Conspiracy for the Least." (Sizer, 1984, p. 156)

Sizer carries the challenge idea over into his discussion of the 'subjects studied' side of his research paradigm. Like Rice he makes a point for skills to be taught as tools for working with ideas and for ideas to be worked with from a unified or relationship viewpoint. He spends more space developing the idea than Rice, for whom it was a given, proven concept. For Sizer it seems more a goal to be sought, and he spends a whole chapter, 'Principals' Questions,' presenting a design for achieving it. To a degree unmatched by either Rice or Sinclair, Sizer expresses concern for the absence of the skills of critical and resourceful thinking. Rice's unification of ideas concept hints at these skills, but Sizer harps on them and on the overemphasis placed on facts in school programs at the expense of these skills. This is, perhaps, more an issue of the Age of Information; but it might also be a result of the way schools have developed over the years, and therefore a corollary to the fundamental issues raised by all three researchers, made prominent by the needs of the age.

Retention of facts is more precisely measured, facts are more conveniently organized and more easily delivered than the skills of critical analysis. Sizer's main point related to this fact is his description of the structure of the school; here he gets into management as an issue. Where Rice and Sinclair deplored politicians' greed, selfishness, graft and favoritism, Sizer deplores bureaucracy. He sees bureaucracy as being responsible for creating and enforcing a framework which mandates a focus on facts and almost excludes the exploration of ideas in today's schools. Among the elements of the framework he cites as particularly at fault are: (a) organization by subject departments, time blocks and job descriptions, (b) the dependence on orderly predictability in order for centralized bureaucracies to function, and (c) the use of readily quantifiable data for evaluation and comparison to the exclusion of other information. (Sizer, 1984, pp. 206-207) Sizer does not seem to see this centralized control structure so much a matter of greed, etc., as a matter of distrust. Governments seem to so distrust the ability of their principals and teachers to provide a proper education that they have removed all autonomy from them with numerous regulations and bureaucratic structures, essentially reducing students and teachers to automatons, to use Rice's phrase. Sizer's issue, then, is that politicians (bureaucrats) must be removed from positions of control, and decision making power must be returned to its appropriate place, the principals and teachers of the individual schools.

Sinclair raised issues of teacher quality and status; Rice said that teachers make the schools and superintendents largely make the teachers. Sizer reiterates all these issues, moving the coaching function, given by Rice to superintendents, to principals who, he says, should be principal teachers. He raises questions of teaching load comparing teachers to actors while pointing out the impossibility of being consistently up for a six hour daily performance. His typical teacher, Horace, sees 120 students per day and can spend five minutes per week on each student's work if he keeps his work week to forty-two hours - and this is an English teacher. If he prepared for each class by reviewing the material and planning the sequences, his work week goes over sixty hours. He also holds a part-time job to supplement his salary after twenty-eight years of teaching. (Sizer, 1984, pp. 19-20). Like Sinclair's teachers, Horace doesn't have time or much incentive to improve or refresh himself in his subject matter or the techniques of teaching. Sizer cites several studies in support of his sketch of Horace, one of which shows that the real income of teachers dropped 13% from 1970 to 1980 (p. 185). Sizer also cites the flatness of the salary scale over time, the absence of autonomy, and the lack of recognized ways to advance and still teach. With all the problems of social contracts, distrust, inappropriate training, low status and poor incentives that he writes about, Sizer still flatly states that, "...improving American secondary education absolutely depends on improving the conditions of work and the respect for teachers." (p. 180) He spends a fair amount of space making proposals for doing just that.

All three researchers want students to be taught appropriate things well by skillful, properly trained teachers in an atmosphere of respect. For different reasons or from different perspectives all three have identified politici-an/bureaucrats as a major impediment to bringing about the conditions they write about as being desirable. All three point to the teacher as the critical element in the conduct of schools and discuss the factors which affect teacher quality. Finally all three point to a single, primary source of all problems and all the hope for needed changes: the people of America in general and the parents of schoolchildren in particular.

Rice (1893, p. 26) puts it this way, "..unjustifiable ignorance as well as criminal negligence on the part of parents." Sinclair (1924, p.440) calls upon the American people, "...while giving their money to give also their time, to study the schools and school problems, and see that their money is honestly spent for the children and that educational policies are in the hands of men and women who love the children and believe in freedom and enlightenment.' Sizer, in tones of wonder and bewilderment, follows his description of schools with the conclusion, 'Perhaps it is such schools that America wants, predictable conduits for a smattering of information and vehicles for the rituals of the society. My wanderings among the schools convince me that such is now what most people want.' He adds a few sentences later, 'What troubles me is that few Americans seem really to care very much.' (Sizer, 1984, p.200)

Thus there have been, from the embryonic stage of our present public education system to its current stage - whatever that is - three fundamental issues: (a) control of the system, (b) outcomes of the system's processes—learning, and (c) the instruments of those processes—teachers. Finally, and most significant, the responsibility for confronting those issues, for addressing those issues in such a way that the institution serves the goals and needs of a free people lies with those people themselves and solely with them. This is truly the issue.

The words of Upton Sinclair resonate across sixty years of history, three wars and the Great Depression:

> To the educators of the United States—and also the parents of the United States - I say: Look about this country of ours...look with your own eyes and ask if this is a civilization with which you are really satisfied. A country in which five percent of the population owns ninety-five percent of the wealth, and uses it to increase its share of income and control; in which ten percent of the population exists always below the line of bare subsistence; whose city slums are growing like monstrous cancers, while the farms are being deserted because it no longer pays to work them; where tenantry and farm mortgages are increasing every year; where crime and prisoners in jails are increasing even faster;...where ninety-three percent of the expenditures of government are devoted to the destroying of human lives; where the surplus wealth needed at home is sent abroad to seek opportunities of exploitation, to make our flag a symbol of greed and turn our army and navy into debt-collecting agencies.' (1924, p. 441)

This is the fate of our children, and across five thousand years echoes the question of the Hebrew speaker, 'Is there anything of which one can say, 'Look, this is new'?'

The quotations from 'Ecclesiastes' are not used frivolously. With Walden University's focus on social change, its processes, strategies and agents, it is well to remember - and sometimes necessary to point out - that there are some very change-resistant aspects to the nature of mankind. That is the purpose of this paper. It should also be pointed out that fundamental reassessment of an institution is often circumvented by the substitution of cosmetic changes, and the larger and more firmly entrenched in the habits of a people an institution is, the more difficult it becomes to effect substantive change. This is what has happened with added hours, standardized tests and all the other recent educational reforms.

American education lacks only a Pope-figure for a set of striking parallels between it and the pre-Reformation Roman Church. The Church sold indulgences, granted benefices, provided priests to perform rituals, and had a well-fed bureaucracy for its governance. The people submitted docilely to its rule, made burdensome contributions to its projects, and relied upon the offices of the priests to do for them in things religious and to interpret religion for them. American education grants diplomas, provides teachers to perform rituals, and has a well-fed bureaucracy for its governance. The American people docilely send their children to school, make burdensome payments in support of education, and rely upon the teachers and bureaucrats to do for them in things educational and to interpret education for them. Finally, just as there were monks, scholars and priests who labored earnestly, ministered with loving care to the needs of their flocks, and examined with diligence the objects of their study, and just as there were rulers like Frederick the Wise, who sought only to know the duties of a Christian prince so he could faithfully carry them out, there are today teachers, scholars and administrators who labor lovingly, study with diligence and seek earnestly. The problem for change in this twentieth century may be that, like their medieval counterparts, today's laborers, studiers and seekers stay within the system, stay away from heavily controversial issues, and keep their questions, if they have any, to themselves. It's all so polite.

When the scholar-priest Martin Luther began to rage against the practices of the Church, he at least had a fundamental document from which to work, even though he had to use two languages to develop his arguments. American education lacks not only a charismatic figure to serve as the nucleus for fundamental reform, it lacks a scripture from which he or she can operate. There is also some legitimate doubt about the readiness of the American people to follow and endure the fumblings and regroupings which eventually produce workable reform. It would seem that unless such a person arises, pronounces his or her own scripture and proselytizes vigorously from it, American education must wait for its Age of Reformation to come from the sheer toppling weight of its institutional structure, and that will be long in coming since we persist in shoring it up with ever increasing taxes. Where are you, Martin?

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FREE FORMING: GREATER PERSONAL FULFILLMENT THROUGH LIVING DEMOCRACY

Chapter III, Images Of More Democratic Social Organization

by Robert Skenes

Much of this chapter is based on a fairly new body of thought called 'systems theory.' Although it is somewhat abstract (I will offer lots of concrete examples), it is not that difficult to understand. If you think of a system as a group of things (or persons) in relationship to each other, then 'systems theory' is concerned with the description and study of those relationships, functions, patterns, laws and so forth which make the group of things organized.

In this chapter, we will be particularly interested in *human* systems or systems of persons. Such *social* systems would include a loving couple, a family, a group, a class, a school, a business, a church or any gathering of persons who come together for some *purpose* and who achieve some kind of *organization*. I will use the terms 'organization,' 'group' and 'community' pretty much interchangeably to mean the system formed by any number of persons in relationship. Thus, when I say, 'Social organizations are such and such,' I mean that people's relationships get organized in certain ways. In 'social organizations' I include such informal but real 'organizations' as your family, your circle of friends, and so forth.

Until recently, people studying human relationships tried to imitate the methods of non-human physical sciences. Laws and rules of simple cause and effect were applied to human and social activities. But human affairs always seemed more complex and unpredictable than cause and effect kinds of thinking could fathom.

Then a biologist named Ludwig von Bertalanffy pio-neered a new kind of thinking which he felt was more appropriate for and more descriptive of *living* systems—organisms and group of organisms. Generally, *open* systems are equated with *living* systems. All living systems are considered 'open' in the sense that, as long as they are alive, they are in more or less open-ended transaction (that is, continuous and incomplete interaction) with their environment. Thus, all forms of *human* groups would constitute open, living systems.

Chris Argyris' definition of a *living organization* seems to be among the most comprehensive in literature. It will serve as a useful umbrella for tying together the dimensions of social organization described below: A living system is '(1) a plurality of parts (2) maintaining themselves through their interrelatedness and (3) achieving specific objectives, (4) while accomplishing 2 and 3 adapt(ing) to the external environment, thereby (5) maintaining their interrelated state of parts' as a whole (1964, 120).

As living organisms, people are open systems. We each have (1) a diverse group of organs and cells which (2) maintain each other through relation and exchange and which (3) achieve the goals of building bones, digesting food and ultimately keeping us alive, while (4) also adapting to their physical and 'social' environments and thereby (5) maintaining their interrelated wholeness.

Because of our independence of *physical* habitat and our ability to create our own *social* habitats through communication, we humans might be considered more open than most organisms. In order to survive, we humans create *social* systems (organizations) through which are fulfilled the needs of the 'subsystems'—the persons and groups—with them. These human organizations meet the demands of the encompassing social and physical systems in which our human organizations are embedded. Jantsch notes the 'couples, families, tribes, small and large organizations, cities, states, and armies with all their respective technologies form human systems' (1975, 55). Two or more persons maintaining relatedness in order to achieve some objective create a system of social organization. Just as people are by definition open systems, so also are human social organizations open systems.

Problems in Defining Social Organization

My aim in describing in detail the characteristics of social organization in general is to image ways in which we might judge the *relative degree of openness* of the various human groups in which we daily participate. My assumption is not that the *most* open would be the best (it would in all likelihood be pathological). Rather, it is that too many of our forms of social organization in America tend toward the more closed end of the continuum. Even though our culture is supposed to be founded on beliefs in freedom and democracy, many of our ways of doing things were (and still are) based on the old authoritarian model of physical science laws of cause and effect. Today more and more persons are feeling that the old model is not appropriate for *human* relations. These people are beginning the struggle to recreate their selves and their human relationships at home, at school, at work, at church and in government in new and more personally fulfilling ways. Often the result is a more *democratic* and freedom nurturing kind of organization. So our immediate question is, what might *more open and democratic* kinds of human organization be like?

To further complexify matters, you should remember that at the most basic (and most important) level - that of individual persons—the openness of any human organization is a matter of attitude or belief. *Degree of Openness* is a humanly perceived quality; thus it depends on people's observations and beliefs about their relationships and their milieu and does not depend on any 'independent' or 'objective' qualities of the system. For example, successful, straight-A students will likely perceive their school as more open and fulfilling than students receiving failing marks and being otherwise frustrated by the system of the school. Or for a more extreme example consider why some people in Nazi concentration camps despaired and died while others did not. Those who had some inkling of hope or some smattering of faith that they would survive thereby actually *experienced* the concentration camp differently than those who lost all hope. I shall return to this issue again after describing the dimensions of openness.

Perhaps the reader has by now noticed a difficulty to which I have alluded in the previous chapter when I pointed out the inadequacy of words to describe the entire essence of a person. It is tremendously awkward to try to attempt describing complex, multi-dimensional, non-linear processes with linear strings of words.

The problem seems somewhat similar to the numerous attempts at describing the ineffable experience of mystical consciousness. Most such verbal descriptions speak only to persons who already know of its nature from their own experience. To others, the same words and descriptions convey different, often hollow and nonsensical, meanings.

In my experiences with two or more open educational programs with which I have worked, I have had similar experiences in attempting to describe the experience which participants might find in such a more complex, non-linear learning system. Most often the in-coming participants had trouble fathoming what I was talking about, until they actually began participating in the program. This 'communication gap' was not only my problem, but was almost universal among all program staff and past participants in their talks with perspective or incoming participants. The *words* were understood by both groups, but the meanings were distinctly different.

This is why I am now designing growthshops ('work-shops') in which persons can begin to feel and *experience* some of these ideas in ways that carry their meanings into their own lives. However I know of no resolution for this problem that might aid our exploration through print of *more* open social organization with numerous examples. This style of presentation may help to suggest not only the different levels within human systems, but also their fantastic interrelatedness and complexity. Finally, because I am attempting to describe functions as a *dynamic whole*, you may want to reread the dimension descriptions, at least once, because the first will take on fuller meaning after you have read the second and so on.

Like the characteristics of more self-fulfilled persons, these dimensions were sorted and synthesized from over four hundred possibilities which I called from the sources listed in Appendix B (in my book).

Five Dimensions of Social Organization Forming a Chartered Whole

Vickers describes a living organization or system as having a 'form' which is 'more abiding than its substance' (1970, 72). He notes that each system has a 'standard' which serves to regulate both its internal and external relations. This standard might be called a *charter*, for it sets the norms by which a group or system defines itself. Such charters are seldom written, yet they govern the relation of people in groups. Example of organization charters would include the roles and limits of behavior in a school, the Bill of Rights, the rules of etiquette at a cocktail party or any other set of values, beliefs and behaviors that shape people's relations.

For any human organization such a charter defines the nature or whole which is the system, be it a family , business or school. A group's charter forms the grounding core assump-tions and beliefs which organize its members' actions toward the group's goals. Thus, a social system is a reality based on its members' beliefs about their roles and relationships (Lazlo, 1977,61).

For example, suppose I am invited to a party at some-one's house, and the first thing I do when I arrive is to go to the hors d'oeuvres tray and fill my pockets with fistfuls of munchables. If I am not thrown out physically, I will likely become the social outcast of the evening (much less ever receive another invitation from anyone present). My behaving thus would violate something in the charter of that group, and I would likely no longer be considered a part of it. Of course, if I were from a different culture, like 'Bora-Bora,' I might be excused or I might even have the expectations of the charter explained to me by some kindly soul. American even have a charter for groups in elevators—while riding in one it is considered deviant or suspicious to look at someone you don't know.

Erving Goffman, author of *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), and others, has been an articulate recorder of these unspoken, but very binding aspects of our social charters for some time.

Another way of describing this characteristic of social organization is to say that they engage in '... a continuous process in which both so-called building materials as well as energy-yielding substances .. are broken down and regenerated.' Just as persons eat, digest and nourish themselves with food, so also do social organizations 'metabolize' the activities of their members. These continuous processes are so regulated that 'the system is maintained in a steady-state' (Bertalanffy, 1968, 158). Bertalanffy noted that the 'steady state' was maintained within a system in which 'turnover rates are the faster the smaller the components envisaged...' (1968, 141, 160).

This sounds more complicated than it is. A school, for example, maintains itself as an organization of persons chartered for educational purposes. This is so even though there is a continuous 'turnover' in student 'components'. At the next higher level, turnover in teachers and staff, although slower than that of students, still doesn't change the 'steady state' of the school. As Kenneth Boulding puts it, social organization 'maintains its role structure amid a flow of constantly changing individual persons occupying these roles... An organization might almost be defined as a structure of roles tied together with lines of communication.' (1969, 27).

Boulding describes this systems ability to 'maintain a structure in the midst of a through-put of material' (1969, 27). Thus, a social organization is self-regulating such that it can maintain its particular form or wholeness under a variety of circumstances. In so doing it achieves a degree of independence from its environment such that 'the intrusion of outer energy will not seriously disrupt internal form and order...' (Allport, 1972, 345). As in the school example, the intrusion of new students or of several new teachers does not usually 'disrupt' its organization. Rather, they are digested into the system.

Another aspect of social systems is that their 'steady states' are equifinal. That is, the same end-goal may be reached from different starting points and through a variety of actions. Another way of saying this is that, if the organization repeats striving for the same goal, it does not have to repeat the same processes to achieve it again. For example, even though a teacher teaches government every year, he or she may use field trips one year, library research projects one year and simulation-games in still another year to reach the same learning goals. Thus, in a more open and democratic social organization or community, there can be many alternative paths or methods for reaching the same goal or objective.

An implication of equifinality in social groups is that the system's limits of what is not an acceptable path or means would be well defined. This would mean that most of its laws would be proscriptive rather than prescriptive. Such proscrip-tive rules would define what is not acceptable and thereby allow more freedom to individuals to choose or create their own alternatives.

For example, a history teacher might decide to abandon her or his prescriptive way of teaching by telling students what to learn and how to learn it (such as, 'memorize the book for tests'. The teacher could replace this with a proscriptive rule like, 'You can learn about the American Revolution through any means you devise—reading, writing, going to museums, etc.—except by looking at comic books.' This kind of rule *opens up* the organization of relations which forms the class and allows the students the freedom and creativity to self direct their learning by devising their own paths to the goal of finding out about the American Revolution. Thus, there is much more *freedom* inherent in a system which is specific about what one must do than in one which prescribes how things must be done (Holt, 1972, 18).

A *more* open form of social organization would not narrow a person's choice-abilities by having either too many prescriptive or proscriptive laws or procedures. For instance, the 'steady state' of schooling may be achieved in a variety of ways and with various combinations of human and physical resources. A more open school system would not have prescribed sequences of classes or numbers of credits required for graduation but would make explicit its *charter* of educa-tional goals and then permit maximal variation in the paths that persons could create or follow to fulfill the charter.

The pathological extreme of this dimension would occur when a system was no longer evolving and growing so that its charter would become rigid and ossified. Such a system would be characterized as stilted, unchanging and dogmatic. An example of a social organization suffering from this extreme form of chartering would be a highly bureaucratic government agency. When an organization becomes more concerned with following set procedures than with serving and responding to the changing needs of its participants, its charter has ceased to evolve and it has moved toward becoming restrictive and closed.

Thus a *more open and democratic* form of social organization is one in which individuals have maximal freedom and are not forced or coerced or subjugated to the group. In a social system. The *individual* person becomes the pivot rather than the 'system' or 'organization,' because the individuals are able to reflect on themselves and on their organization and thus support or change its nature with their beliefs and actions; however the 'system' cannot reflect on its 'self' - except by way of all people who compromise in getting together for group sharing, dialogue and redefinition.

To summarize this dimension, all forms of human organization in which you participate are chartered, either tacitly or explicitly. The charter is what gives abiding organization, shape and wholeness to a group of persons despite their various roles and actions.

Furthermore, if you are a part of a more *open and democratic* community, you will find that its ability to maintain a steady state will mean that there are many acceptable paths and many allowable means to reach the goals in the charter. Moreover you will find that most of the group's rules and laws will be a proscriptive setting of limits instead of prescriptive dictating of procedures. After considering the other dimension descriptions, we shall look more closely at what some specific characteristics of the charter of a more *open* and democratic social organization might look like.

Integrating Via Complex, Non-linear Control and Regulation

Open systems usually occur as nests in open subsystems and social organization usually occurs with nests of lower and higher organization. For example, Lindeman points out that human life can be 'seen as a network of overlapping communities, with compatible or clashing goals, in several of which one individual may be a responsible participant...' (1963, 5). Thus colleges and businesses are larger organizations which 'feed' for 'energy' on high schools which are larger wholes than the elementary schools which are fed, in turn, by families which are made up of a still smaller number of persons in relationship. Each of these groups lives in a larger social group and each is maintained by the exchange and interaction of members of social groups at the next lower level.

Coordination of all this activity is *decentralized.* No one 'boss' or authority controls or directs the maintenance of a school system *and* the organization of *each* school *and* each department in each school and so on. The social organization chartered for education is *integrated* through couples and decentralized activities of the individual and (sub)groups of individuals who participate in that organization.

Laszlo abstractly describes this kind of hierarchical ordering or integrating of the interdependent subsystems within a social organization: Individual subsystems within a complex system fill the roles of coordinating interfaces. They assume the liaison between those (lower-level) components of the system which they control, and those (higher level) ones which exercise control over them. Their function is to pull together the behavior of their own parts, and to integrate this joint effort with the behavior of other components in the system. This is a function which all natural systems must perform if they are to maintain themselves (1972, 68)

Pugh *et al* cite Thompson's observation that in more open systems 'the higher the complexity, the lower the centralization' (1972, 308). For instance, as a high school grows in size and complexity, it becomes more and more decentralized in the sense that discreet function, such as those of the history department, are carries out with more autonomy and independence from centralized control. Members of the history department are given more authority to make their own decisions.

In a social or human organization, this notion of centralization concerns who has the authority to make decisions affecting the system (Pugh, *et al*, 1972, 306). A *more* open and democratic organization involves more individual subsystems - persons, groups, institutions—in determining its structuring, goals and decision-making. For just as an individual's personality organization integrates mind and body through the deployment of his or her beliefs about self and world, so do social groups result and cohere from individuals and the aggregations of their beliefs and actions. Thus, a more *open* social organization system is one which is more democratic and participatory—dialogical—in the design and manner of maintaining its organization. *All* of its participants can engage in defining its character and its activities.

Miller describes a number of hypotheses about decentralization (1965, 405, 406). Among the most important which seem to function in social organization are (1) Decentraliza-tion of decision-making generally increases the speed and accuracy of decisions for reducing local strains; (2) As a group grows and adds more components, the components become increasingly autonomous ('This is probably because the system cannot meet the increasing costs of processing the information to the systems decider, as required for centralized deciding."); (3) As a community becomes decentralized, subgroups increasingly make choices without the aid of relevant information existing elsewhere in the community; and (4) Up to a certain level of stress, social groups do more centralized deciding when under stress than when not under stress; beyond that level, deciding grows increasingly decentralized until the group dissolves or stress is relieved.

A family is a good illustration of the notion that, as a group grows and becomes more complex, the components become increasingly autonomous. When children are first born into a family they are very dependent on it; yet as they grow and develop their own complexity, they become more and more independent of the immediate family group in supplying their needs of food, clothing, shelter, and sometimes even love. Coupled with this is the fact that, as they emerge into their autonomy, children increasingly make choices (good or bad) independent of the knowledge or experience that their parents might have offered.

That the social organization becomes more centralized under stress can be the way a family can respond to an emergency or a threat of a burglar. Even though they usually make decisions by holding family councils to discuss problems, one or two members are likely to decide what to do without consultation. Or the New Deal, as American response to the stress of depression, could be seen as an example of a society's becoming more centralized. We have responded similarly in the face of world war.

An example of a system becoming more decentralized after a certain threshold of stress is reached might be found in the confusion and panic that gripped the South Vietnamese soldiers in their attempts to leave the country when its fall was imminent. This illustrates progressing beyond decentralization to the dysfunctional extreme of chaos. The decline of the Roman Empire also illustrates social organization becoming increasingly decentralized until it dissolved.

In summary, then, social organization is usually a nest of organizations or groups which is integrated and laced together by complex processes of decentralized regulation. When you are a member of a more open and democratic group, this means that you will be able to take an active part in forming the goals and shaping the activities of the group. You will be able to make your own needs and ideas felt, instead of having to take orders from some all-powerful boss or authority.

Being Permeable and Based on Trust and Responsibility

One of the more simple and common definitions of a social system found in the literature is that it is a form of organization which maintains itself through constant commerce with its environment - that is, it has a 'continuous inflow and out flow of energy through permeable sound barriers' (Katz and Kahn, 1970, 152). Except for the phrase 'permeable boundaries' this sounds much like the characteristics I have been writing about above. The idea of permeable boundaries has to do specifically with an organization's relations to the environment. When an organization's boundaries are permeable, it means that the organization can be *engaged* and that it can engage.

Learning is a dynamic illustration of the permeability of an organization's boundaries. For example, during a certain critical period in a kitten's ability to see, it has a tremendous plasticity or permeability in the ways its brain learns to make sense out of the world. After this developmental period, however, the kitten has a very difficult time learning to perceive in a new way. Thus, kittens kept during this critical period in a place with only horizontal lines will bump into verticals such as a chair or table legs as if they were not there. After the critical learning or developmental period, there is a closing down of the permeability or engagability of the kitten's visual system (Lewin, 1974). Thus, during this time of increased 'degrees of freedom' within the kitten's visual system of organization, there is also increased possibility for error.

Social organizations often operate very similarly. For in their early formative stages, they are more permeable or open to members' ideas and suggestions. Too often, they begin to bureaucratize by fixing their goals and standardizing procedures. Then they are no longer permeable to new or different ideas.

Differences in the degree of permeability of boundaries of an open school and a traditional school demonstrate differences in the degree of openness of the two forms of organization. The typical open school's boundaries are much more fluid or permeable such that parents or workers or craftspersons can, and often do, come into the system in various roles, including 'teacher'. And within an open school's boundaries, defining notions like 'classes' or 'levels' or age groups often become permeable to the point of non-importance. In a traditional school, on the other hand, teachers usually must be salaried, credentialed union members, and classes are discreet entities defined by standard procedures. In a traditional school, such boundaries are seldom if ever engaged, crossed, or called into question.

At the level of a social organization, permeability depends for its existence on an attitude of mutual trust and responsibility among its individual 'components'—its participating group or persons. For without trust or mutual respect and acceptance, a social group becomes defensive and closes or reduces the permeability of its boundaries.

Responsibility is demonstrated through persons' concern for not violating the trust they share. It involves respect and acceptance of different and often competing subgroups and their goals.

Thus, another consequence of permeability in social systems is that persons or subgroups will participate in and share responsibility for choosing or creating or recreating the activities, goals, regulation, leadership, evaluation, and so forth of the group or organization.

The *more* permeable an organization is, the more it has increased degrees of freedom (Jantsch 1975, 37). And the more degrees of freedom within a group, the more tolerance or room there is for/both/disruptive and creative 'error.' In a more open and democratic social organization, this means that the permeability of its boundaries creates a tolerance for ambiguity, and thus opens 'cracks' and allows creative or deviant alternatives to enter or develop within the organization. A consequence of this increased permeability is that the group comes to experience increased dissensus, dissonance and conflict (Kariel, 1969, 61). However, a more open and democratic social system, because of its increased permeability, trust and respect for differences, can 'contain,' respond to and grow from the criticism it generates. This also relates to its ability to be flexible and evolving.

The role of trust and responsibility in a more open and democratic social organization is illustrated in the example of Summerhill School in England. There the functioning of individuals, their use of their freedom to do what they wish, depends on the responsibility of all individuals in not infringing on the abilities of *others* to do what *they* wish. In this highly permeable and accepting organization, problems of 'dissensus, dissonance or conflict' which arise are resolved via all the members of the social system *participating* in the evaluation and regulation of the organization. As you will soon see this is the way Lewis-Wadhams School operated.

Yet an organization which becomes permeable to a pathological extreme, would be open to poison, domination and control. Its lack of discrimination could result in blandness and possibly in uniformity at all levels. For example, Aztec culture was likely permeable to a fault in that it had 'room' for the 'error' of trusting and engaging with the Spanish conquistadores.

To summarize then, when you engage in a *more* open and democratic form of social organization, you will find that it is based on trust—the mutual respect and acceptance of its participants. Through such increased 'permeability,' you will experience greater freedom to fulfill your own goals and desires through actively participating in the structuring of the organization. Such a broad participation helps the organization be responsive to constructive criticism and permit creative deviance as well. Thus, this dimension is embodied in the dialogical attitude of being open to yourself, to others and to the world.

Being Diverse, Plural, Rich and Varied

A more open organization will include a variety of uses, purposes and values - and the *means and actions* which people or subgroups use to fulfill values and purposes. Thus, from their greater complexity, more open social organizations have more sources for energy and more possibilities for action.

In the social sphere, greater diversity means there are many resources which a person or subgroup can reach and use. These resources include differing communication, valuing, and interpreting systems as well as many potential alternative paths, means and actions for achieving goals.

Returning to the examples of an open and a traditional school used above, there are many aspects of the typical open school which make it a more diverse form of organization than the traditional one. In open schools, the 'curriculum' or subject matter is usually less canned and pre-packaged and often more problem-centered. This provides possible ways and means of learning which are much less *pre* scribed. Many open schools take to heart the notion of individuals being unique, respect-worthy ends, whereas the greater majority of traditional schools are modeled after *mass production* organizations which establish and employ set procedures aimed at the goal of teaching everyone the same things the same way. This is thought to be more efficient in terms of time and money. However, there are other possible goals for efficiency, such as 'efficiently' helping our growing children to become *more* fulfilled, more of what they uniquely can be. Operating from such personal strength, they will also be more able to make their way enjoyably in the world. In these times, then, a school based on a more open and democratic organization might be considered more 'efficient' at achieving the goals of nurturing such human values as independence and respect for others' freedom and uniqueness.

Complex, modern societies, as more open forms of social organization, encompass many cultures and social groups as subsystems within their boundaries. Thus, more open social groups are accommodating of a plurality of socially accepted values, and of diverse ways of *being* and fulfillment. They encourage valuing and accepting of human variation such that alternatives available or permitted correspond to differences among participants' needs, interests, goals and so forth. More open and democratic organizations encourage a greater range of individuality than many simpler cultures, because value dimensions are not consistently dictated or prescribed. Rather, people find more avenues for their personal expression and fulfillment.

For example, picture the tremendous diversity of individual persons, groups and organizations, and the value systems and subsystems that they create and maintain within American Society. Tolerance (if not always respect) for the identification, pursuit and fulfillment of multiple goals by individuals is exemplified by the existence of the communes, religious sects, army communities, traditional colleges, alternative colleges, cockfight clubs, organized crime and on and on. Of course, there are almost as many examples of groups being repressed that the converse might be argued as well. However, a counter argument would be that, in most cases, such lack of tolerance is a *local* subgroup phenomenon and it is up to repressed persons to find or create their own 'place,' their own group.

This leads back to the notion that the individual person is the pivotal or more basic unit in any social organization, since it is only individuals, not groups, who can reflect upon themselves. Thus, in a *more* open and democratic social organization, individuals would be considered as ends in themselves, not pawns of society, government or special interest groups.

The most important implication of this is that the *locus of evaluation* resides in the *individual* participants of a group or subgroup. Evaluation comes from participants up, rather than downward from higher authorities. William James urged this when he announced that we must refrain from being 'forward in pronouncing on the meaningless forms of existence other than our own' and we should 'tolerate, respect and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these ways may be to us. Hands off:

neither the whole truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer...' (1962, 129).

Diversity can become dysfunctional, however, when subgroups in a culture or organization elaborate and specialize to the point of robbing individuals of competence for self-direction and autonomous action. People's reliance on special groups - doctors, teachers, lawyers, bosses, counselors, parents social workers, repairpersons, entertainers, and so on—can become debilitating. In biology, this is called hypertrophy. Hypertrophy occurs when an organism's subsystems become so specially adapted that they are unable to adjust to the slightest change or variation in climate, food supply or other environmental conditions. Such a change spells extinction for the organism. Similarly, the less variety of survival activities we possess - such as procuring food or making clothing and shelter—the less adaptable we are should there be some dramatic change in our current, high technology ways of living.

To summarize, in a more open and democratic social organization, you will find many components or elements. As these elements become more numerous, they also become more specialized and thus more interdependent (Miller, 1965, 405). This interdependence relates back to the dimensions of permeability and integration, for interdependencies can be thought of as creative, stimulating, or conflicting patterns of *tensions which affect* relatedness.

Evolving, Changing and Being Flexible

This dimension brings the description of social organization full circle, for it focuses once more on the aspects of organization as a whole. Whereas the first dimension was concerned more with how the whole defines itself by chartering, this dimension concerns the relations of the system with its environment and its ability to change both.

The 'steady states' of social organizations are *not* 'static' states. For paradoxically, open social groups both remain in more or less steady states and at the same time are changing continually—internally and in relation with the environment. Perhaps Laszlo best outlines this characteristic of social systems in noting that they create themselves *from* themselves in response to the challenge of the environment. They do not just simply maintain a status quo, but they *evolve* new structures and new functions as time goes by (1972, 46, 47). Thus, a social organization can reorganize to meet problems and stresses in the environment (which includes its subgroups—that is, itself). Further, a more open social organization will have developed structures for sensing problems (or needs), and for inventing, deciding on, implementing and evaluating effectiveness of its actions (Miles, 1969, 382). In this way, social organization is *flexible* - adapting and evolving *unpredictably* via mutations and innovations which are preserved or 'written' into the system charter if they prove useful. This dimension of social organization might be characterized as its *unfinished* nature which gives rise to a readiness to grow, to enhance the 'degree of order and become something more than it is at present' (Allport, 1972, 347).

However, this characteristic is in tension with a counter-tendency in social organizations toward closure or standardization. Katz and Kahn point out how this tendency is both liberating and restraining, when at first, social organization is 'governed by dynamic interaction' of its members and their values and actions. Later on however, 'fixed arrangements and conditions of constraint are established which render the system and its parts more efficient, but also gradually diminish and eventually abolish its 'equipotentiality' or ability to reach the same goal through many paths (1970, 156).

Cornuelle notes that 'repetition of established procedures' without capacity for innovation is the end of growth and beginning of death. Holt aptly describes this as learning *too much* from experience, or learning so much from the past that an organization can't learn anything from the present (Holt, 1972, 45). Thus, a more open and democratic social organization is not wholly without tendencies to closure, to standardization or habituation, but it also manifests capacities for experimenting, testing, relearning and for abandoning, reaching out from, or deviating from established practices and habits. In manifesting such capacities, more open organization may show phenomena of 'false start' and 'overshoot' (Bertalanffy, 1968, 160).

The very notion of actualizing your inner capacities and potentials for fulfillment is based on this characteristic—an open system evolves and grows. And both your organism and your personality are open systems. The growth, development and evolution of your personality is a natural growth co-process integrating with your biological maturing. This growth and development are both based on your establishing and then abandoning and reestablishing various procedures, such as exchanging walking for crawling or talking for cooing. In learning to talk, a child is responding to an *inner* need and desire to communicate in the verbal environment encompassing it and is thus evolving toward more complexity in relations with its environment.

This characteristic has tremendous implications for the design and function of more open democratic systems. For it means not only that the social organization (by way of its human agents) is sensitive to its participants' needs and wants, but also that it can *respond readily* (by enabling its participants to respond). A more open and freedom nurturing social organization, then, would move away from being too eager to 'help' toward encouraging individual responsibility and self-determination among its participants. Rather than attempting to serve, take care of, meet, or fulfill people's or group's needs *for them, management and administration* 'would be primarily concerned with obstacle removal and facilitation of task involvement' so that people could act to meet their own needs (Sherman, 1970, 37). Leadership and administration would be more non-intervention oriented, rather than being obsessed with controlling or policing standard, habitual practices and goals to reduce 'error' and deviance—two chief sources of innovation in social organization.

John Holt writes about some effects of a more closed, interventive and standardized social organization—school or family—on the lives of children: 'the more we intervene in children's lives, however intelligently, kindly or imaginatively, the less time we leave them to find and develop their own ways to meet their true needs.' And '...no one can find his work, what he really wants to put all of himself into, when everything he does he is made to do by others' (1972, 66, 63). Most traditional schools exemplify social organizations in which much smothering overhelpfulness of this sort occurs. They also typically show little sensitivity to (or concern for) any mismatch between organizational functioning and their participants' intrinsic wants and needs.

For in social organization, the possibility for error is an indication of the degree of freedom. We learn by making mistakes, fooling around, by experimenting, and by experiencing than by someone telling us what to do and how to do it. If we are constantly told how to do, we become out of touch from our true inner desires so that, when we no longer have parents, teachers or bosses to direct us, we will likely not know what to do with ourselves. Given chances to make mistakes, we can explore and discover our own capabilities, our own competence.

A social organization's flexibility is indicated by its *readiness* to change for the sake of putting the values of its participants into practice. Rollo May calls this readiness *the essence of freedom*, noting that 'to cling to tradition, with the plea that if we lose something that worked well in the past we will have lost all, neither shows the spirit of freedom nor makes for the future growth of freedom' (1973, 1959).

With respect to this dimension of social organization more than most of the others, it seems to me that American society is evolving toward closure. Bureaucratization and standardization have become rampant in nearly all of our important social institutions. However, the growing 'mis-matches' between people's needs and institutional responses are giving rise to innovations and creative restructuring through such 'movements' as those for equality among races and sexes and for alternative spiritual, medical and educational paths. These are movements toward increasing the openness and democracy lived through our many and various forms of social organization. They are movements toward making real the *freedom* which has for so long symbolized what America is all about.

The dysfunctional extreme of the evolving dimension of social organization is similar to that of being overly permeable. For a system which has gone overboard in evolving, changing and being flexible would be so malleable and adaptive as to be chaotic. It would have no direction, no charter, no steady 'state.' Lack of stability would likely lead to insecurity, fear and vicious defensiveness among its participants.

Finally, to summarize this dimension, when you participate in a more open and democratic form of social organization, you find that it is responsive to your needs. Leadership and managers are concerned more with having organizational structures evolve and accommodate participants' evolving needs and other 'challenges from environment' and less with 'efficient' repetition of set ways.

Chartering More Open and Democratic Social Organization

If social organization is really based on *beliefs* of its members, these dimensions should suggest something about the kinds of beliefs necessary for most participants to live in order to create a more open and democratic social or cultural system. This set of beliefs would constitute a charter for the system.

Here we encounter a paradox in that defining a charter closes down some openness of a social organization. Yet are not all social organizations defined - if not consciously, then by default? Definition can occur on many levels and by many criteria however. It is my assumption that chartering a system on criteria of openness and democracy constitutes a definition at a level which increases freedom and possibility in the same way that *self*- discipline enhances the expression of a person's creativity, whereas externally imposed discipline (coming from a more *prescriptive* level) most often stifles the expression of creativity. Leonard Duhl addresses this problem, noting that:

> ... to some, equating planning with democracy seems paradoxical, since they claim that planning subjugates and makes people dependent. Planning in a *closed* society does have this effect. Planning in an *open* society can only facilitate democracy by reducing the inequities, maximizing the range of choice, educating people to use the choices they make, and making these choices more widely available (1962, xi).

Thinking consciously about the charter(s) you subscribe to in participating in various social groups will help you decide which *values* you want to see embodied by those groups.

Thus, we must close down on some things to be free to do or pursue others. This is the paradox of discipline and habit in tension with freedom and creativity. For example, most Western composers adhere to an eight tone scale when creating new works. They also have habituated the grammar of writing music, although they may use that grammar in unusual and fantastic ways. Through the discipline of the grammar, they funnel their creativity.

Based on dimensions of social organization just described, a charter of your (and other participants') beliefs which will make a *more* open and democratic social organization a reality would consist of at least the following:

1) You both *give and benefit from* mutual trust and responsibility.

2) You are freed from defensiveness and suspicion of others.

3) You encourage risk-taking (with responsibility, i.e., without risking—choosing to risk—*for* others).

4) Thus you also encourage individual activity and independence and cooperation more than passivity and dependence.

5) You function by finding and/or creating social and cultural patterns that suit your intrinsically felt needs, your inner values and your personal goals.

6) You *respect and value* deviants in person or pattern as critics, creators and explorers of alternatives that might benefit the group or some persons in the group and help it grow and evolve.

7) You base authority on the *experience* of individuals, rather than on role, title or social or economic status. You view authority as more a function of current competence and what a

person can do than as a function of seniority or how much they have done before.

8) You and other individuals can participate in many different subgroups and on many levels or in many 'roles' within each.

I intend this list as suggestive. It is for getting you *started* in thinking out what attitudes you might need in order to start opening and democratizing the social groups in which you participate.

Let us approach this problem of chartering more open and democratic social organization from a somewhat different angle. Remember that, as an open, living 'system' you personally exhibit the five dimensions of social organization just presented. Since individual persons are the most important force in determining the nature of any social organization, it make sense that, in order for any organization to be more open and democratic, its participants must possess more open and democratic *personality* 'organization.' Let's consider what this might mean in terms of the dimensions just described.

First of all, your personality 'charter' would include wanting to nurture both your own *and* others' personal fulfillment through actualizing the values described in the previous chapter above.

Secondly, your values, thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviors—your self—would be integrated such that you would be able to respond fluidly to shifts in your own needs and to challenges from your environment. Being more fluid, instead of dominated by one or two behaviors or traits, your personality organization could be thought of as decentralized.

You would also be permeable, in that you would engage and embrace the many experiences that life offers you. Thus, you would be trusting - that your self could learn and grow from broader experiencing, and that other persons could help you in your quest for fulfillment

As you learned to feel and experience more, both within your self and in the outer world, your personality would grow more diverse and differentiated. For as you learn more, you become more aware of differences and subtle variations and their importance in understanding the complexities of living with others.

Finally, through all of the above functioning together, you would continue to develop and grow toward greater actualization of your most constructive human capacities.

Thus, we come to a circular paradox. For it would seem that one of the best ways to nurture personal fulfillment is to participate in more open and democratic organizations. And one of the beat ways to create more open and democratic organizations is to pull together people who are emotionally fulfilled.

Maslow asserted that the characteristics of self-actualizing exist in all persons as species-wide potentialities. Thus, he believed that groups, institutions, societies and cultures can either *foster or inhibit* their members' personal fulfillment. 'The sources of growth and humanness are essentially within the human person and are not created or invented by society, which can only help or hinder the growth of a rosebush, but not determine that it shall be an oak tree. This is true even though we know that a culture helps bring them to fruition. The 'better' cultures encourage self-actualizing, while the 'poorer' ones do not (1968, 211).

Many of you must be thinking about now that this all sounds hopelessly idealistic. Well, it is meant to be. For I have developed these images of personal fulfillment and of open and democratic social organization as *ideals* to which you and others may aspire *if you wish*. Yet those ideals *can* be lived—now. Many groups and individuals are now actively engaged in the hard *practical tasks* of putting them into action in their own daily living at home, at work, at school, at church, at play, in health care and other settings...

FREE FORMING - Chapter VII
People Jazz:
Creating our World Through Communication
by Robert Skenes

> ***Our images of belief are clothed in the flesh and blood of reality by action....Blake wrote that the man who did not believe in miracles surely made it certain that he would never take part in one (1973, 61, 114).***
>
> **—Joseph Chilton Pearce**

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reiterate and expand on the idea presented in Chapter I that people create and shape the largest portion of the realities they perceive and experience. It is important to look at some of the ways in which we are, on the one hand, bound by the communication habits and ways of looking at the world which are already part of us below consciousness and, on the other hand, at ways in which our abilities to communicate and dialogue with each other and with environments give us the power to recreate and transform ourselves. For understanding of this process of believing and communicating can be useful in our personal efforts to redirect and change our living patterns—whether along lines of social openness and individual self-actualizing which I have described above or along any other lines. For some readers, these ideas will not be easy to grasp. However, if you are willing to struggle a bit with them and to ponder the examples and illustrations, I believe understanding will emerge for you.

We Can Become Other Than What We Are Now

There are so many different realities or ways in which we *could* create our selves. The potential for becoming *more* than what we have been, than what we are, than even what we imagine, is tremendous, if not infinite. "More" refers not to any quantities, but to qualities of our existence—joy, love, creation and laughter, as well as pain, anguish, loneliness and despair.

Today, those of us who feel that something is lacking in our relationships and our lives, but who aren't quite sure what it is, have made a choice by default. By not choosing to do otherwise, we have become what we are. Unless we each make that choice, as individuals, it is likely that we will never become other than what we are already.

Personally, I have come to this study because I am no longer willing to simply go along with and be controlled or "guided" by institutions and social customs when I disagree with the values they reinforce. I am dissatisfied, not just with aspects of my self, but with much of that around me which has contributed to making me what I have become.

I want to engage in a dynamic process of recreating my self, and thereby recreating my environment of human relationships and institutions, and thereby recreating my self in new says that I and any others conceive as more fun and more fulfilling. Somehow my viscera tells me that something more is to be experienced from living on this planet than being considered a good consumer, good worker, good lover, good parent, and so on—as judged by society. Something, some action, seems missing—hiding, neglected in our human and communicational potentials. I feel not unfulfilled in my human relationships, but under-fulfilled. I ask myself: "How many people do I feel deep friendships with? Why is so much interaction at work (and sometimes at home) a pretense of politics and guardedness when it could be friendly and cooperative and sharing? Why are my children treated at school as if their thoughts and feelings matter less than getting through the chapter? Why are my feelings and my dignity neglected in favor of procedure and policy in my relationships with health care and other institutions?

I am both frustrated and annoyed from hearing people express dissatisfaction about something as if it were unchangeable, as if fate or natural law had precluded all other possibilities. I can imagine being more fulfilled and I struggle and strive to structure my reality to that imagining. And as I do so, that imagining changes. This study is a part of my imagining and striving.

As I become more aware, this blur of feeling starts to focus. Coming into view is not One Way, but a number of social patterns and forgotten or culturally ignored ways of being and doing. Oftentimes these threaten our learned realities, our cultural habits, our patterned ways of seeing. They do not fit and flow with the mainstream.

Yet they are now popping up everywhere. People are starting schools, becoming midwives, forming healing groups, meditating, forming businesses on the basis of participation, learning imagery and trance uses for problem-solving. And more and more people are standing up for their beliefs by petitioning and marching and protesting and suing and boycotting for numerous causes. The views of reality these actions put forward are becoming widespread as more and more persons talk about, experience and participate in them.

That these things are happening in our culture is a healthy sign. For I believe that this diversity offers an expanded arena for individual fulfillment. I find this cacophony of opportunities and choices encouraging because it is the essence of what America is all about—freedom. The more that people begin taking an active part in improving and enriching their own lives, the more they are freed from those institutions and social customs which would control them.

This has been the thrust of my efforts at sketching some rough images of social and community openness and of the fully functioning person. In painting and exploring these images in thought and action I am less interested in what we have been than I am in what we might become. That they are sketchy and incomplete at this point doesn't upset me, for their incompleteness means that others who use them will have to flesh them out themselves. Thereby they will function more as tools and rough guides than as prescriptions.

While such idealistic views as give rise to these images do involve the economics of competition for resources (which include power and beliefs and commitments), it seems to me that they have as much to do with the possibilities and potentialities we can *conceive of* and are willing *to strive for*. The communicational characteristics of these kinds of conceiving and striving form the core of our lives. They are what I wish to explore in this chapter.

Creating Our Selves and Our Worlds Through Communication

Many of the ways we have organized our selves into cultures and societies have had the effect of limiting us, of wastefully caging our capacities and freedoms. This social control has gone overboard. Yet even though we sometimes feel locked into our customary patterns of acting, we still have the power to become other than what we are already. We still create and recreate and reaffirm our selves by communicating with one another. Let us explore this process briefly before discussing in the next chapter some of the specific actions that can be taken by readers who want to start sailing via images of opening and self-actualizing.

Compared with most other animals, we humans have lengthy periods of infancy, childhood, adolescence and so on. This means that we have long times for differing kinds of development during which we soak in much information about our environments and ourselves as we penetrate those environments. In other words, we humans continue *learning* and *growing* throughout our lives. The lengthy periods of infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood afford us the time to play with and develop our physiological and imaginative and symbolic processes—the tools we have that make us tremendously flexible and malleable.

We shape our potentials for being and becoming through communicating with the organisms and settings engulfing us from birth—and before.

The versatility of this human characteristic of making our selves, our personhood, out of the communication experiences we have is sometimes mind-boggling. For example, consider Guy Lafrancois' account of the child, who in 1951, was discovered in an Irish chickenhouse:

> I first met Chicken on one of those long, lazy days of early fall....I was a young lad of eleven years....He came shuffling toward me, crouched and bent over, his arms hanging by his sides, and his hands slightly curled backwards. As he approached, he twisted his head from side to side, looking at me with a beady, darting glance, and making small clucking noises deep in his throat. When he was about three feet away he stopped, cocked his head to one side, and stared at me with one eye. I stared back stunned.
>
> "What's your name?" I finally managed to ask. He cocked his head a bit more. I repeated the question. "Cluck," he answered. I realized then that he was the chicken-boy, Robert Edward Cuttingham, the boy whose feebleminded parents had left him too long and too often with the chickens. The rumor was that he always slept in the chicken coop...perched on a railing, and that when he awoke in the morning he filled the air with a crowing noise....
>
> One day the school superintendent visited the Cuttinghams and reminded them that their son should be attending school. They readily agreed that he should go, and the dignified superintendent returned to school with Chicken scurrying along behind, occasionally stopping to peck at something, and then dashing frantically to catch up, all the while clucking, peeping, and chirping, much like a chick darting about behind its mother.
>
> In time, his teacher discovered that clucks, chirps, peeps, and a peculiar eerie crowing were the extent of Chicken's vocabulary; while he was not afraid of people,

> he had neither the desire nor the ability to socialize, and he was not likely to learn much in school, particularly since he refused to stay indoors. He had soon learned there was nothing to eat on the classroom floor (1973, 21, 22).

This is a dramatic example of how our communication experiences shape our realities. We have come to think of human worlds as distinguished by the use of symbols—language, art, mathematics. To us, the chicken-boy hardly seems human because his communication experiences consisted of clucks and crowings; and those were the communication forms he carried inappropriately into human culture. We might be tempted to conclude that the youth grew up without culture. And indeed he did so far as culture is a human invention. However, the chicken-boy learned the kinds of things humans learn in culture. He learned appropriate communication forms and postures. His glances were darting one-sided and penetrating—like a chicken's. His scurrying gait interrupted by ground-pecking forages for food was a chicken walk. Needless to say, a boy of the genus homo is not a chicken. However, the remarkable ability of the lad to become chicken-like is a bizarre illustration of Pearce's point that humans have an innate "capacity and drive to create a culture....It is an enormous potential that realizes itself against the most extreme odds" (1973, 55).

Lacking a culture of humans to grow in and learn from, chicken-boy was shaped by the "culture" of the henhouse. This "shaping" is a process of communication. The human was malleable and flexible enough to become chicken-like, more so than any chicken could ever become humanlike.

With humans, unlike other animals, it would seem that we have been given something extra—whether by evolution, some God, or some chance accident in the cosmos. Although we are still limited in our physical form by our genes and by certain biological necessities for the maintenance of life, we have been vastly freed to create our communicational and social realities rather than accept them or die. The limits of our abilities to creatively adapt in the world have been expanded by a *quantum*, compared to the limits of our nearest animal relatives.

Communication has often been viewed as one of two basic life processes. On the one hand, we exchange energy with our environments. We take in food and water, convert them to energy, and use that energy to interact with our environments. On the other hand, we take in information about our environments and ourselves and most often put it into symbolic form via images and words. We use this communication to shape ourselves and our worlds. To a greater extent than is true for any other creatures on this earth, the worlds of people are communicational worlds.

We take in information, consume it, digest it, generate it ourselves and give it out—all both consciously and unconsciously. This is analogous to our metabolic processes. While it is through our metabolism that our bodies are nourished and flourish or wither, it is through the basic life process of communication that we humans construct our "communicational realities" on which we base our being and acting in the world.

We create what we *believe* to be reality, but what we create is a reflection of how *we* see our surroundings filtered through our own organism. Thus, we and our environments are intimately wedded. For we act according to what we think about our environments which, in turn, are our and our associates' creations. A large—perhaps the largest—proportion of the environments which co-determine us are our *images* and *beliefs* concerning them.

This is not such a "new" idea about the nature of persons. We find it in writings from antiquity to contemporary statements about the distinctive characteristics of human life:

> Whatever is received is received according to the nature of the recipient.
>
> —Thomas Aquinas

> Man disposes himself and construes his disposition as the world (in LeShan, 1968, 85).
>
> —Dogen, 13th century Zen master

> Knowing is not the process by which ready-made objects impress themselves upon the mind but is the process by which the self renders sensations significant by reading itself into them. (in Thayer, 1963, 234).
>
> —John Dewey

> In every act of perception we select one of the infinite number of possibilities and thus we also limit the number of possibilities for the future (in LeShan, 1969, 81).
>
> —W. Heisenberg

> Where your thinking is, there is your experience;
> As a man thinks, so is he;
> That which I feared is come upon me;
> Think and grow rich;

Creative visualization for fun and profit;
How to find friends by being who you are (1977, p. 13).
—Richard Bach

We perceive our worlds largely as reflections of ourselves. I use the plural form of world here because every person has a slightly different world, although some aspects touch and overlap for groups of us in friendship, family, business, culture.

Studies on perception illustrate that we do not passively receive sensory impressions from a world out there. Rather, we selectively perceive; and much or most of that selectivity is determined by our feelings, goals, and purposes at the time and for the future and by our past experiences as we bring them to bear on the situation.

Studies of people in other cultures teach us that there are any number of ways of perceiving the world—perhaps almost infinite possibilities. In our cultures we tend to learn a few of the possible ways; and so long as we abide by those relatively few ways, other possibilities are not open to us.

However, since many ways of experiencing reality exist, we have the potential at any time to transcend the family or cultural views which we have learned and reinforced by our actions. Through transformations in our beliefs and thoughts and feelings we create new worlds, new realities. Thus, our communicational realities "are in effect the major portion of our human ecology. As such, they essentially determine the human condition....It is our communicational realities which inspire us, which drive us mad, which provide us our most exquisite pleasures, which propel us to the brink of disaster' (Thayer, 1968b, 66; 1971, 1617).

Herein lies a paradox. On the one hand, we have so many possibilities for choice. On the other hand, as soon as we embrace or join with others in agreement on some possibilities, we exclude others Our agreements and thus our realities are always evolving out of our communicating with others and with our selves. The direction of this evolving is a matter of aesthetic choice. We choose what pleases and gratifies us from what is available—what fits into our desires and ways of being in the world.

Unfortunately, however, these are still rather radical ideas among many of the priests of modern science and the purveyors of our material and profit oriented culture. Far too many doctors, politicians, business people, corporate managers, lawyers, social scientists, teachers, parents and others are so engrossed in and enamoured with their visions of manipulation and control that they would not even consider such threatening notions. They prefer to believe that the way they see the world is the way it is or ought to be—for everybody.

But we can change our selves. By shifting our energies of commitment and priority among our realities, what is possible for us changes. Yet how many of us, though not altogether satisfied with our selves and our social environments, settle for the ease, the comfort and the safety of being 'realists' and 'knowing' our possibilities? How many of us do not dare to entertain acting on our dissatisfaction because we don't like a struggle, especially with our selves. Because we humans create our realities does not necessarily mean that we are in control of all we create. For what we create turns back and controls and binds us in many ways when we aren't looking or thinking about it.

Re-creating Our Selves Through Awareness and Action

Value, as Whitehead said, is limitation and both involve faith. Valuing and choosing accordingly involve faith that a choice is worth sacrificing other possibilities. Yet with our basic communicational realities, we are not always immediately aware of other possibilities. The bulk of our values are decided for us by those who nurture us into selfhood. For 'by the time our reasoning has developed enough to reflect on the process by which our reasoning has formed, we are part and parcel of the whole process, caught up in and sustaining it' (Pearce, 1973, 12, 58).

Through words, images and other symbols, we play with reality. We present to ourselves and others what is important to us and our feelings about what we believe to be important, and we tend to find those things in our realities. Some languages like those of the Hopi and Eskimo use mainly verb forms for expression and tend to be grounded in the present and in the environment. This is in contrast to English, which is more of a nominal language—focusing on naming and classifying objects. Although our logical and language categories are arbitrary, they are not trivial, for they influence our experiences, either by accident or by design.

All this is illustrated by the fact that we only have a few words for frozen precipitation—hail, snow, sleet, slush. Yet Eskimo people, for whom the quality and nature of snow is vital, have over twenty-two different words for it—each describing precise, and to Eskimos, *important* qualities such as its wetness, size of flakes, thickness of falling, and hardness on the ground.

But if communication processes can lock us in so tightly to a world view, they are also the most powerful means for freeing us to see the world differently. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall believes that, as a species, our greatest gift is to bump up against cultures (i.e., specific views of reality) different from our own and thereby learn about our own cultural habits and be freed of them (1976).

The point of all this is to demonstrate that our models of the world, our communicational realities, and our beliefs about them, help create the reality that we experience.

For example, acting on the certain, known truth that the earth was flat was different after Columbus postulated and then proved its roundness. Then for certain purposes, it became more practical to believe the earth was round. Yet for building houses, it was still safe to trust in flatness.

And today, most of us think of the world as a solid mass. Yet, for some purposes and to some things, it is but a filmy cloud. Physicists have postulated and now "discovered" Neutrinos —subatomic particles that come zipping and showering through space and pass through the earth as if it were hardly here at all!

Most scientific paradigms function in this way. Good examples are found in theoretical physics, where notions such as relativity, quarks and black holes were set forth *before* they were "discovered" in the extant universe. LeShan spells out the implications of this:

> If when we learn new things we can see the world differently, then as we learn new things we react to it differently. We are then living in a different world, a world with different possibilities, different impossibilities. Which world is the right one, the real one? Is it the new world or the old?
>
> [Moreover,] what is important about something is also largely our part: of this strange game of give-and-take our consciousness plays with reality How a thing is put together, organized, is our decision, not an implacable part of reality. And we usually interpret this value and organization as existing in the things themselves and act on this interpretation (1976, 10, 13).

Calling the creations of our various communicational realities "multiform reality," Frank Herbert offers this illustration of how our present beliefs filter and shape the reality we experience. He describes the problems science students have in learning to read X-ray plates. Invariably, students "see" things on the plates which those more skilled in reading X-rays say are not there. The students see what they believe they will see and often become indignant when someone points out that part of what they "see" is not on the plate (1973, 92). Even science—that mythically endowed process which is supposed to arrive at fact and truth—is subject to the process of communicational reality making Like the rest of us, scientists' beliefs shape the "fact" and "reality" they are able to see That is why the history of science, as Thomas Kuhn has beautifully demonstrated, is not a story of the continuous and progressive building up of foundations of facts.

Rather, it is the story of the competition and often political struggle of convincing the believers in established and customary theories that a new theory works and explains. Most often, evidence makes little difference in these struggles. Many of us are familiar with the story of Galileo's persecution by the Pope for putting forward the idea that the earth revolved about the sun, as well as the story about how his colleagues refused to even look through his telescope because such things were—for a fact—not possible.

The mainstream of scientists today are every bit as conservative and clinging to theories as were Galileo's colleagues. There are many examples that could be offered. Our modern medical establishment's cold shoulder approach to both acupuncture and hypnosis as methods of anesthesia, even though they are demonstrably safer and less traumatic for the patient, are but two examples.

We allow ourselves to be debilitated by letting the experts decide, the experts usually being the scientists or social scientists. Those who believe in science have propagated a new myth. It is that scientists know what is important to investigate, that they investigate it in an objective, impersonal way, and that they arrive at the truth. This myth tells us that we as "common" people usually (1) do not know what the problems are—we no longer name our own problems—and (2) we do not have the wisdom we need to begin working on our own problems. Instead, we come to increasingly rely on the experts and distrust ourselves. Illich tells us that "this new mythology of governance by the manipulation of knowledge-stock inevitably erodes reliance on government by the people" (1973, 93).

For example, because scientists are scientists, they can only consider certain areas for study; and they must do the studying in the proper scientific way. Other areas simply are not open for investigation. Susanne Langer once facetiously pointed out that the study of miracles would be off limits for scientists because they are most interested in what they can study in their laboratories under so-called rigorous conditions of investigation and what they can subject to repeated experiments in order to verify their findings. Miracles, of course, tend to be somewhat rare occurrences which usually don't happen in the laboratory and are seldom replicable for verification. Emphasis upon scientific methodology and the same results no matter who performs the experiment causes blocking out of other kinds of evidence, such as personal anecdotes and accounts of events. However, the latter are valuable evidence in historical study, in courts of law, and in psychiatric work—especially if there are similar kinds of accounts. Consider the case for the miraculous again. People who are generally the beneficiaries of healing experiences or other dramatic changes in life style have a knowledge gleaned from their experience and they care less about the assertions of impossibility which come from scientists consulting statistically quantified data labeled "Proof." Some things in life simply cannot be captured through statistical inference. For most people, experience is the test of proof. Allen Wheelis warns against relying on scientists and technocratic experts to tell us the proper ends of human endeavor:'

> All our ends are lodged in faith, science helps with means. All the great and fundamental questions are answered, if at all, only by leap of heart, by deepest feeling, by faith What is important in life? What is worth struggling for, and how much? Should I love my neighbor, concern myself with his suffering? How far does neighborhood extend? To the coast? To North Vietnam? Shall I accept violence and murder as necessary to man's life and arm myself accordingly, or shall I declare them elective and work for their elimination (1971, 108)

It is true that experts may have some insights into an area. However, so many decisions about what to do are ultimately value decisions made after considering the situation. All of us to a lesser or greater degree have the ability to decide and act for ourselves and to form judgments and beliefs about those actions. Our competence in acting and reflecting and developing judgment grows as we exercise it.

Our communicational realities, constituted into beliefs, form a kind of "concentration of energy' which we use either to maintain our views of the world or to change some of those views, and thus change the world we view. And in this process of defining our world, we impose on our selves whatever limitations we accept; therefore, we can also *re*define those limitations and expand our possibilities for being

From the discussion thus far, one might infer that I am assuming too minimal a role for the world, matter and the environment in the process of communication. Pearce explains it this way: "Nature is something of which I am a part, and which I must represent to myself. But it is also something which I am not. My thinking and that nature thought about create an event, but they are not identical" (1973, 193).

Some Examples for Blowing Open Your Mind

The point is, that for *humans* , our environment does not have a *necessary* relationship with our realities—we can choose, "... We *represent* the world to ourselves and *respond* to our represen-tations. There is, I would add, a subtle and random way in which 'the world' responds to our representations too" (Pearce, 1973, 2). Let us consider, along with their implications, some powerful examples of "the world" responding to our communicational realities

In trying to think about a spectrum of ways we might create our selves differently from or in addition to the ways we already have and must, it can be provocative to examine and to entertain the validity of some rather unusual and striking phenomena. (By "validity" I mean that something works or is useful for someone's purposes.) When trying to break out of previous ways of thinking about communication processes, a certain "jarring" or "shock" effect is desirable. It is my hope that skeptical readers will be able to get past "it's impossible" or "it's baloney" initial reactions and take a kind of "what if" attitude.

Most of us would agree that different cultures bear and promote different communicational realities. Persons of other cultures shape their worlds differently than we do. However, we also might agree that there are certain limitations which universally constrain us as human beings of flesh and blood—falling from a great height kills, water drowns, sharp steel cuts and fire burns. Right? Sometimes—but *not necessarily*.

Certain religious sects in Ceylon, India, Greece and other parts of the world have an annual ceremony in which some or all of their members demonstrate their faith by walking barefooted over beds of hot coals. Skeptics argue that the walkers build up tough calluses on their feet in preparation; however, some of the fire beds have been measured at temperatures hot enough to melt aluminum on contact. Of course, not everyone who attempts to walk the coals succeeds—some persons and their clothes burst into flames and they are killed; others survive but are maimed. On the other hand, those who succeed often wear long robes which brush the coals as the person dances through.

In some areas, certain candidates are chosen by their peers and undergo three months of religious studying, intermittent fasting and other preparations. In other localities the same persons perform the feat year after year, often with their children. Still other fire-walkers undergo no preparation. Pearce tells of laboratory tests in England in 1935 of two "imported" Indian fakirs.

Oxford physicians, chemists, physicists and psychologists prepared and observed the tests. One psychologist, apparently eager to understand yet quite dumbfounded by it all, caught the attention of one of the fakirs. "The fakir, sensing the longing, told the good professor he, too, could walk the fire if he so desired—by holding the fakir's *hand*. The good man was seized with faith that he could, shed his shoes, and *hand-in-hand* they walked the fire ecstatic and unharmed" (1973, 111). For more detailed accounts of this phenomenon, see Krechmal (1957), Feinberg (1959), Grosvenor (1966), Kosambi (1967), Pearce (1973, Chapter 6), and LeShan (1976, Chapter 2).

When Thayer poetically says that "For man, communicatively,/ Whatever works is" (1972, 15), there seems to be a lot more possible within that "communicatively" than most of us usually imagine. The phenomenon of fire-walking would seem to blur our normal lines of distinction between what the world can do to us and what we can do in the world

Firewalkers restructure their ordinary interaction with burning coals by embracing—with mind and body—different beliefs about the effects of fire on their flesh. And lo and behold, when feet meet fire, the walkers reform the event through communication—what Pearce calls "an ultimate allegiance of commitment" (1973, 114).

Although he does not use the fire-walking example, Thayer has explained its possibility in terms of our great adaptability which results from our communication abilities:

> ...The comprehending system, as a living system, is *adaptive*. It *will* adapt to those external or internal conditions which it *must* adapt to in some way, or which, in the service of the individual, it would be helpful to adapt to. By-and-large, any normal comprehension/evaluation system could develop almost any set of accommodate-abilities, given appropriate developmental steps and a large enough payoff (either consciously or noncon-

> sciously) for going through the stress which accompanies the instability of that development (1968a, 55).

Thus, we orient ourselves not so much according to what might be objectively "true" for everyone, but according to what we believe will work to help us dance our lives as gracefully, economically, and cleanly as we can, given what we have choreographed for ourselves. If fire-walking is too exotic and foreign for you, there are powerful illustrations of how people can restructure the realities they experience right here in American culture. Consider the woman who is able to lift up the end of a car in order to free her husband pinned beneath it. Or think about the stories of certain Christian religious sects concentrated mostly in the Appalachian region. Members of these sects frequently demonstrate their faith in God and Jesus by publicly handling rattlesnakes which sometimes strike the handler and/or by consuming arsenic in quantities well over "prescribed" lethal dosages. Although not every member of these sects comes through unharmed, by far the majority does. A large part of the key to success in these cases is the person's *acting* as if these feats were possible. By *trying* and believing in one's abilities, odds for success are greatly increased, whereas sticking to the traditional socially impressed beliefs—you are a frail and weak person who cannot possibly lift up the end of a three thousand pound car or survive rattlesnake bites or large doses of arsenic—insures that those attitudes will be fulfilled. The point of all this is to show that even though our ways of perceiving and acting in the world are largely force of habit, we can change those ways by committing ourselves to acting on different beliefs and assumptions. If we don't want to see violence and brutality in the world, then we shouldn't carry weapons or look on others as violence perpetrators. Fear and hatred can be read non-verbally and can easily lead to their own fulfillment. Likewise, however, looking on people as good and worthwhile most often results in people behaving in ways to merit our beliefs. This may sound hopelessly naive to some readers. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of experience and evidence which supports the idea that our deepest and strongest held beliefs result in their own fulfillment.

Yet we are complex creatures. Often we may think we believe something completely, but we still find ourselves acting contrary to that belief. For instance, we can tell ourselves that we aren't tense and that we won't worry and then still get sick from stress. Changing our conscious and rationally or intellectually held ideas does not necessarily change the beliefs still embraced by our bodies and our non or sub-conscious minds. Our being is more than just our conscious, rational state of awareness. Belief and reality constructs are integrated with the non- or subconscious aspects of our selves as well.

We are creatures of feeling as well as of logical thought, and much of our feeling and thinking occurs below the level of awareness. Thus, when we wish to change, we need to learn how to pay attention to the quiet utterances of those primal levels of thought and feeling and to integrate the fluid image symbols of the non- or subconscious levels with the verbal symbols of logical thought. If we fail to integrate change through all levels of the mind, we will be divided against ourselves and our energies will be scattered. The *alignment* of conscious and non- or subconscious levels allows us to develop greater competencies and skills than we would have if we ignore the thoughts and feelings that flow continuously below the level of awareness. Herbert illustrates the rather paradoxical interrelations between the conscious and nonconscious aspects of our being when he states that "the virtuosity of our customary speaking response tends to conceal from us how this behavior is dominated by improvisation. This nonawareness carries over into that 'talking' with our universe by which we shape it and are shaped by it" (1973, 100). Philip Slater explains this complexity:

> The mind is a complicated piece of circuitry that connects not real objects, but the representations of those objects and the individual's responses to them. If a person loses a limb, the mental pathways associated with the limb do not immediately disappear—in fact the person for a long time tends to hallucinate the limb as still existing, so powerful are these representations (1974, 117).

Although we "know" intellectually that our foot is no longer with us, our bodies were habituated to its presence and continue to try to function as if it were there. Thus, we find that our belief patterns and communicational realities have been fastened into us as we have grown. Changing them often takes a jolt, a conversion, or a peak experience such as the religious ecstasy of the fire-walker or the life-threatening shock of the car accident. There are a number of therapies, such as rolfing, patterning, bioenergetics, Reichian, autogenic training and Feldenkrais method, which work on changing the body's configurations and releasing set ways of being, thus transforming and opening the mind's perceptions as well. While efforts to transform our ways of perceiving and being can begin with either mind or body work, we in Western culture have overemphasized development of our rational powers to the point where we have nearly forgotten the tremendous richness and versatility to be found in developing our non-rational, metaphoric, and subconscious selves.

Now, however, many people are beginning to help us realize these abilities which artists and other creative persons have known how to tap for ages. For readers interested in further exploring this area, I would recommend these excellent treatments of it: *Changing Images of Man* (Markley, 1974), *The Metaphoric Mind* (Samples, 1976), *Magical Child* (Pearce, 1977), and "The Psychenaut Program: An Exploration into Some Human Potentials" (Houston, 1973).

Perhaps some readers feel that I am asserting too great a role for communication and choice based on a few weird and far too deviant cases. Yet, as Kuhn has pointed out, most scientific discoveries are made by those scientists who pursue the "mistake," the fluke, the "spurious" finding. Rather than throwing out the data which doesn't fit their bell-curves or their explanations, as so many social scientists do regularly, they shift their energies into a passionate search to understand.

Similarly, I believe that these, to us non-ordinary, examples indicate powers and potentials which a great many of us might be able to learn from and use. Fear of exploring them may testify less to their existence than to the desire to maintain our belief systems like security blankets and ignore anything which might threaten those beliefs.

In any case, it takes more than the challenging of a few of our assumptions to spur a reformulation of accepted communicational realities. So let's look briefly at a few more examples that provide something for our minds to chew on.

Fire-walking grows somewhat more "possible" if we think seriously about the related occurrences of psychosomatic illness, biofeedback control, and "psychic" healing or, to coin a phrase, psychosomatic health.

The relationship between illness and our communicational processes for dealing with our environments—particularly stress—has been well established. For example, Stanley Cobb points out that "among the various factors that precipitate a disorder of function in man,... symbolic stimuli must be considered as probably usually present and often important. Words uttered or written by other persons, or even gestures, may start a train of physiologic events that leads to tissue damage" (in McCorkle, 1973, 3). To illustrate this, most of us have at some time or another had the experience of catching the tension of someone else who is visibly upset, nervous or angry. We are also finding that, when people experience intense feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, they are setting the stage for illness. Such feelings among orphans and elderly persons who experience the loss or absence of loving and caring relations can lead to otherwise inexplicable death—simply from loss of the *will* or *desire* to live and not from any "organic" causes.

If we accept the notion that "stress," for example, can cause ulcers, it is certainly not so unreasonable that other communicational activities might create health—and possibly even protection of a person's tissues from damage from fire.

Psychologist Lawrence LeShan worked on a project for twelve years studying psychosomatic illness. In the course of the study, he became interested in so-called "psychic" and "paranormal" phenomena. Investigating psychic healing, he found a solid "residue" of experimental work and evaluations of reported claims—after discarding "the 95 percent of the claims that could have been due to hysterical change, suggestion, bad experimental design, poor memory, and plain chicanery" (1974, 102).

From studying and working with numerous psychic healers, LeShan was able to teach himself healing skills. Later, after practicing and experimenting with his skills, he also had success at training physicians and psychologists in their use. Of course, the healer is not successful every time, but neither is penicillin. (See LeShan, 1974, Chapter 7, for more detail.)

LeShan notes that, although it is not necessary that the healee express belief in the possibilities of being healed in this way, it is necessary that the person *want* to get well. He believes that we do almost everything below our potential. We don't read as fast, jump as high, see colors as well as we might. The same is true for self healing (LeShan, 1974, 110). We do heal ourselves all the time; the potential is ours. But we seldom do it as well as we can. Examples of healing cited by LeShan may be examples of our innate healing experience operating closer to its full potential.

Thayer notes that most models of humans and of communication fail to "take account of the *self-organizing* aspect of the organism" (1970, 6). This self-organizing quality often takes place at a level which supersedes that of our normal, rational consciousness. From the example of psychosomatic illness, it would seem that self-organizing can occur for the immediate benefit of the whole organism but to the detriment of one of its parts—and sometimes, in the long run, to the detriment of the whole. That is, the whole person/organism handles tension or stress by resolving it for the whole by tightening intestinal muscles or by stimulating the stomach's acid production or by tightening the muscles banding the eyes and thereby causing chronic symptoms. Thus, self-organizing—the integration of the mind/organism system—would seem to play a key role in the organism's acting on and/or coping with its environment. This coping can be pathological (i.e., result in physical or psychological disease), or it can be for health.

This may help us toward an understanding of "psychic" healing. For it is possible that psychic healing involves a kind of communication between the healer and the healee at a "transcendent" level of some sort. This level could be one at which the self-organizing functions of the two organisms somehow "free" each other from the usual purposive (and cross-purposive) controls at play within the organism.

Perhaps psychic healing involves some communicative "appetite" at the organism level which has been constrained or dominated by the conscious or ordinary functioning levels of a person. As in psychosomatic symptoms, we may not be aware that we are consciously short-circuiting our autonomic or organismic control system(s).

This possible explanation of psychic healing is supported by the phenomenon of biofeedback control in which, through conscious thought process, one can achieve voluntary control over previously involuntary bodily operations. The principle is that our thinking can intervene and control processes usually controlled "independently" or nonconsciously by the autonomic nervous system or limbic brain. Persons experimenting with biofeedback devices which either visually or aurally indicate changes in the organ or function being worked with have been able to learn to control heart-rate, blood flow to specific areas of the body, muscle activity, cardiac arhythmias, angina pectoris, migraine and tension headaches, impotence, and epileptic seizures. One laboratory biofeedback volunteer exclaimed: "It's as if your body has always been on automatic pilot, and suddenly you find you can take over the controls" (1973, 32). Psychic healing could be something akin to biofeedback but without the machinery.

Perhaps if we learn to believe more in our selves and less in the medical priests, we might someday learn enough in grade school to be our own best doctors.

Let me offer one other set of examples which illustrates how we can tap into and use our powers of organizing and reorganizing our realities through our subjective believings.

Jean Houston and Robert Masters established the Foundation for Mind Research in order to experiment with and study persons' subjective (communicational) realities and their unused potentials (1972; Masters, 1974; Houston, 1973, 1974). Some of their experiments concern a phenomenon, called accelerated mental process (AMP), which has tremendous implications for learning and education (as well as horrific implications for dehumanizing control).

For example, an art student was placed in a trance and told by her guide that in the next three minutes of clock time she would imagine herself—would *experience* "mentally" but with her senses—working with a famous artist for an hour a day for nine months. She was told that her drawing skills would improve considerably from this studying. Upon coming out of the trance, the woman rushed home to work on an idea for a drawing conceived during her AMP experience. She worked continuously on it for thirty-six hours, and then went to sleep exhausted. When she showed it to her teachers, they could not believe it was her work because her style had changed and matured so radically. Many months after the experiment, the woman was still energized from her AMP experience.

During their AMP experiences, other persons worked out resolutions to plots of novels, practiced the piano, and composed songs which were remembered and were as saleable as their ordinary work efforts. It takes little imagination to think of the kinds of creative potentials that children and adults alike might develop in this way.

These kinds of experiences need not be imbued with magical or mysterious properties—although many of us might consider them sacred. Rather, they are creative processes arising from the interplay of our communicational realities. These examples demonstrate that "perceiving reality in different—although equally valid—ways produces different possibilities of interaction with it" (LeShan, 1969, 42).

Although much of our feeling and thinking may go on below the level of awareness, the above examples illustrate that a person can become aware and intervene in many of the processes of this flow of determined behavior. While past experiences form a pattern that determines our future ways of behaving, we can change by not only becoming aware, but by following awareness with effort and will (see Wheelis, 1973). Changing also requires attempting to integrate layers of conscious and non- or subconscious thought and action.

These illustrations are presented to convince the reader that the potential for changing the ways we might think of ourselves, our institutions, our societies, and of the communication processes which generate and regenerate them all comes through communicating—through thinking, imagining, and acting. As Thayer puts it, whatever it is we do as humans "can be carried out only in and through communication and intercommunication" (1968b, 56).

The Challenge and the Promise—From Being Named to Naming

We return again to the notion of belief. We assume certain constructs which enable us to challenge and reformulate others. In clothing ourselves with our assumptions, we take on an air of certainty, as if these assumptions ceased being things we hold and act on in faith and become absolute truths. Moving from the tentativeness of assumptions to the certainty of truth does have advantages. It provides us a strong and binding focus which supports us in our forays into the unknown. Feeling like we have the truth sustains us. It may also make us complacent, causing us to critically challenge the beliefs and realities of those who differ from us but to uncritically accept our own beliefs and the realities springing from them.

It is symbolic processes that make possible the construction of what is, to a large extent, communicational realities. This ability is the evolutionary leap of being that has resulted in human existence as we know it. Slater designates symbolization as the process that gives us not only the capacity to create realities but to ignore information from our environments and ourselves in favor of our symbolized realities (Slater, 1974, 59). For example, symbolization makes possible the belief system which allows firewalkers to tread smoldering coals without being burned. It helps them transcend their environment.

However, symbolization also permits those in power to persuade the powerless to ignore their own experience and knowledge. Take the young child playing outside in the cold without layers of protective clothing. Imagine an exchange between mother (empowered) and child (powerless):

> "Put on your coat"
> "But I'm not cold."
> "Of course you are. It's cold out there. I'm telling you to put your coat on or you'll catch cold. I know what's good for you."
> "But I'm not cold."

People in different cultures experience cold in different ways. And within culture, people experience cold differently depending on their metabolic systems. The above example is a common instance of the way people with power may try to impose their beliefs and experiences on the powerless, oftentimes forcing the powerless to deny their own sensory or experiential knowledge. This is the danger of symbolization—the schizoid tendency Slater refers to that can cause us to be separated from ourselves and our environments. Symbols allow us to use authority to override intrinsic values; and when we begin to ignore our own experience and knowledge in favor of dictates of cultural patterns and authority figures, we begin to be in exile from ourselves and our environments. Yet Slater sees hope:

> The fact that so many new and contrasting strains are now being fed into our culture is a sign both of its illness and its vitality, just as high blood count shows both that an organism is sick and that it is responding vigorously. Rome, during its long decline, exhibited the same eager appetite for alien and deviant traditions, and although it never corrected its self-destructive commitment to massive inequality of wealth and other addictions, this receptivity certainly prolonged its existence. The same phenomenon is visible now... (1974, 190, 178).

But because we are repeating this pattern does not mean we are fated to decline like our Roman predecessors. We are at a turning point. We control our fate—by default or by design. If we choose, we can transform our selves and our cultural patterns in ways that will enable us to *transcend* them, rather than riding them to their logical or illogical conclusions. The conceptual images and their ways of being manifested which I have presented in the first two parts of this study have been my attempt to explore those aspects of people and their communicational realities which determine, control and limit us and those which free, modify and extend us—in what we do and in what we think we can do. It is my hope and my belief that these efforts can lead to many ideas and actions for re-creating old and creating new social, institutional and societal relationships which will help me and others to sense, develop and extend our "organic interconnectedness' as Slater calls it. Each of us is now faced with the challenge and the promise of becoming more involved in the choices that shape the character and directions of our lives. Certainly, the confusion and hired opinions of scientists, doctors and other 'experts' have by now demonstrated that we should not feel safe in leaving our choices entirely up to them. Allen Wheelis outlines our dilemma this way:

> Man does not now—and will not ever—live by the bread of scientific method alone. He must deal with life and death, with love and cruelty and despair, and so must make conjectures of great importance which may or may not be true and which do not lend themselves to experimentation: It is better to give than to receive; Love thy neighbor as thyself; Better to risk slavery through non-violence than to defend freedom with murder. We must deal with such propositions, must decide whether they are true, whether to believe them, whether to act on them—and scientific method is no help, for by their nature these matters lie forever beyond the realm of science (1971, 89, 90).

Scientists and other knowledge brokers do not shape the realities we experience concerning these matters. Rather, it is how each "ordinary" unique person acts on them that counts. We hold the cards and make the choices—even when we choose to let someone else play our cards for us.

I have often thought that, given the somewhat chaotic—and often atheoretical, and therefore "amoral,"—state of our "knowledge" of humans and their social relationings, we might be better off writing poetry and then basing our social policies and institutions on that.

Through this study, I have come to the conclusion that each person's experience forms a kind of poetry—sometimes tragic, sometimes comic, but always important and expressive of the kinds of society which nurtures its authors. Is that society crippling or nurturing, and for whom? That is the question we must ask as we read and share each other's poetry.

Although "we are," as Thayer puts it, "the communication experiences we have had, and we can be what our communicational ecologies *permit* or *force* us to be," we can be more (1968b, 67). We can be what we can imagine, and imagination is the magic synthesis which extends beyond past experience. The image is what guides us—individually and collectively. It is our touchstone.

The story is told about Einstein, who first glimpsed his theory of relativity via visual and kinesthetic imagery. He practiced recalling the imaging until he could summon it at will. Then, holding fast to the imaging, he undertook the years of arduous struggle to transform what he knew into a mathematical formula that could be shared with colleagues.

Thus, perhaps not all of my words about self-actualizing persons and more open communities of relationship are pure idealism or sheer utopian impracticality. For if we are what we do, and if what we do comes from what we think, then perhaps a little "impractical"—but diverse—imaging might help us create some working alternatives to the society we each experience, as Einstein's imaging flowered into divergent but working alternatives to previous scientific beliefs.

But too often, it seems, the what we value of what we do is nonconscious, implicit and, thus, shaping our doing more than we realize. Yet there are always values in how we organize things. When our organizing is "atheoretical" (which is impossible), the values are nonconscious or implicit. In so much social "science" work, the implied theory seems to be: more data is better. But "Better for whom and for what ends?" are seldom asked questions.

When we leave the what we value of what we do to the nonconscious realm, we give up a degree of choice, a measure of personal freedom. In essence, we close down our selves and our possibilities for being by default. The way that so many persons have been defaulting and allowing "experts," social mores, and the proverbial "jones" to influence and control what they do, it is little wonder that Skinnerian and behavioristic means of manipulating people have become so popular.

For example, Skinner wants to develop a science of human behavior based on the "relation between behavior and the environment and neglecting states of mind." Further, he claims that behavioral "technology has been most successful when we can specify behavior and can arrange appropriate contingencies fairly easily—for example, in child-care, schools, and the management of retardates and institutionalized psychotics....What we need is more control, not less, and this is itself an engineering problem of the first importance." Skinner always refers to this mysterious third or plural party—the controller(s)—who remains undefined and undescribed. It is interesting to read Skinner and stop at every "we" and ask "we who" and "for what purpose?" (see Skinner, 1972).

In considering the relations among environments and personal growth, it may appear that I am after goals similar to Skinner's. But the crucial difference for me is in the locus of control. In no way do I wish for these notions about more open social systems to become "contingencies" to be forced on or to manipulate others. The choice must come from within each individual person who seeks to improve and enrich his or her life through creating more open relationships (systems) with others. Carl Rogers' observation about therapy and groups is applicable to people's using (or not) the images I have begun to sketch in this study:

> I see constructive outcomes...as possible only in terms of the human individual who has come to trust her own inner directions, and whose awareness is a part of and integrated with the process nature of her organic functioning (1977, 248).

I am *not* trying to argue or proselytize for *the* "right" way. For there are any number of ways which are right for the person who takes and creates them. What I am urging here, however, is that each of us consider the ways that we are taking and, if we are not satisfied and fulfilled by them, that we take steps to change those ways. And what I am suggesting is that one means of changing is to develop and embrace and begin to act from new images of what is possible, of what we want, or what we feel is proper and right for us each—not for everyone.

Pearce reminds us that we can create from "an open-ended possibility, provided we can open to other world views...as valid, rather than as objects for destruction that our own might reign Supreme" (1973, 61). For example, I do not *necessarily* want to "destroy" traditional schooling or the materialistic and profit-motivated world view. I just want them to stifle a little less, to move over and make some "symbiotic room" for the others of us who are trying to live tuned to a different value rhythm. Because I like channel BIO doesn't mean that I think channels BFS, GOD, MRX, $$$, or AIR and their audiences should be oppressed or eliminated.

Because our cultural heritage has brought some good to some people (while holding out the promise for all), does not mean that we must keep faith and try to perfect our already good—for something. Our society is large and complex enough that it can withstand the diversity of forms and of relations which we already see arising within it—from communes to monasteries, from palmists to priests, from surgeons to faith healers and so on.

For as Thayer states,

> There is no more absolute good or right implicit in man's sophisticated intercommunication-abilities than in the apparent muteness of butterflies. The sole criterion

> lies in the consequences of the ways in which those capacities are deployed (1968, 55).

And yet there lies in our nature a basic paradox. It is that, in order to exist in this earthly realm, we must ignore some possibilities and concentrate on others. We cannot pursue all possibilities at once. And there is a limit to how many we can partially consider and thereby partially invest in our selves before being deemed "insane." To even toy with other, perhaps contradicting, possibilities, we must hold some firm. The more we have a clearly detailed image of "who we are" and thus gain faith in our selves, the more secure, and thereby free, we are to look at others' images. And the more we know about ourselves, about our complexity, the more open we are—i.e., the more able we are, upon discovery of some notion or action that seems aesthetically pleasing, to trade a small or large part of what we are for what we might want to become.

On the other hand, the person whose faith is all in one simple, unelaborated concept of self—be it God, science or patriotism—cannot afford to look around (other than to defend the faith), for he or she would risk too much of their total identity in any trade for different possibility.

These notions, it seems to me, are the best possible argument for creating social systems with enough openness (and room for "error") that we learn to know our selves—our implicit ethics and values—so that we might find out if we like what we come to know. Thereby we would open our selves consciously to making aesthetic and ethical choice for what we become. Knowing our values, we can then learn to inquire of our selves and make explicit our commitments.

Frank Herbert speaks to the social value of this kind of self-awareness metaphorically:

> It dismays some people to think that we are in some kind of a jam session with our universe and that our survival demands an ever-increasing virtuosity, an ever-improving mastery of our instruments. Whatever we may retain of logic and reason, however, points in that direction. It indicates that the creation of *human* societies probably should become more of an art form than a plaything of science (1973, 100).

What so many of us seem to have done is abdicated our abilities to make ethical and aesthetic choices for nurturing each other in favor of those easy, prepackaged choices that gratify our senses without threatening our placidness or risking our emotional involvement and commitment. But in accepting prepackaged choices, we lose the joy of doing our own creating and the sense of vitality and power that comes with our own acting.

This is an echo of Paolo Freire's ideas about the importance of dialogue for our lives. He states that

> human existence cannot be silent...to exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*' (1970, 75).

Gardner Murphy offers this summary of how we create our selves through our images and our communicational realities:

> As man makes new images of himself, he indulges in self-fulfilling prophecies. He has always made himself into what he imagined himself to be. Fortunately, there were some natural obstacles encountered in this process; for he never made himself either as stupid or as cruel as much of our folklore and history has declared him to be. Still, he has been archconstructor of fantasies about himself, which made him feel good, wise, powerful, a little lower than the angels, and in the long, long-run this capacity to keep on striving for something has helped him in inching his way up the long trail (1968, 12).

We shape our worlds—name them—symbolically represent them. Therein lies a godlike power. For once we have named and shaped our worlds via language and art, our creations stand almost independently for a while and interact with us. Through the interaction comes growth and change, which causes us again to rename and reshape our worlds until they envelop us yet once more as new creations. The helix builds—naming, interacting, new experiences, renaming, interacting, new experiences,...

If some of the ideas and ways of being which I have described in previous chapters appeal to readers, I would urge you to begin the kind of dialogue of naming and renaming your worlds which I describe. This kind of dialogue begins with your self—by getting in touch with who you are and who you want to be—and then extends to those with whom you love and work and play, those with whom you share your life. As your dialogue continues, it will grow from words to work, to action and reflection. For growing and dialoguing is a continuing process. It is the process of gaining personal power and worth, of becoming who you can become again and again as you see new possibilities for being.

The poet-philosopher Goethe wrote centuries ago that "whatever is fact was first in theory" (in LeShan, 1976, 19). If you are desirous of making some of the "theory" presented herein a "fact" of your own life, I would urge you to consider what you might dare to become and to then act on your considerings. The next chapter is designed to be of help to you on your personal way toward actualizing both your self and the creation of a community of fulfilling human relatedness.

CHAPTER VIII
IT ALL SOUNDS NICE, BUT HOW DO I BEGIN!— A CALL TO ACTION

Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to offer a few simple yet, I believe, effective suggestions for readers whose interests or aesthetic and intuitive gut responses have been piqued by the images and experiences presented thus far. Like Carl Rogers, whose book, *Carl Rogers on Personal Power,* explores from somewhat different angles many of the same themes found in this volume, I believe that one of the chief reasons for sharing through writings is to "intrigue you into opening your mind to new possibilities" (1977, 103). It is my hope that you will find your appetite for tasting these images of fulfillment and openness whetted. And that you will be moved to taste, digest and grow from your own efforts to experience and live them.

In offering this chapter, I am torn. For, on the one hand, I believe that it is an overbold and often insulting presumption to suggest what actions (or beliefs) others should take. We must each find our own way, for each of us is the only one who can know and feel what is a fruitful and fulfilling path to take for our selves.

On the other hand, it seems silly that you should have to reinvent all of the wheels which will carry you towards living these ideals in your life's journeying. Certainly, we can learn from each other as we each individually learn and find our own ways. In *sharing* our ideas and experiences, we can learn from them through reflection and articulation and dialogue. Thus, I have tried to share honestly and fully with you. Of course, you are free to pick and choose and ignore and reject as you see fit. Such is the spirit in which I offer the material below.

The Information Myth

Much of our present-day mainstream society (including traditional schooling) is built around simplistic yet commonplace beliefs about "information." We are great at studying and researching problems in order to get "enough" information for designing actions. (When these "information-based" actions actually do get "undertaken," they seldom turn out to be solutions.) We have come to rely on persons with special skills to a less extent than we rely on persons with special information or knowledge or expertise—teachers, doctors, lawyers, investment advisors, and many others.

Recently, George Wald, a Nobel Prize winning biological researcher, pointed out that, on such vital issues as the relationship between industrial diseases, pollution and cancer, or between aerosols and the ozone layer,

We are told that 'all of the facts are not yet in'—but all the facts are never in. Each of these situations changes as one studies it. Let us, by all means, have more research, but let us also act, let us do what is needed.

We already know enough to cope with all the major problems that now threaten human life on the Earth. Our crisis is not a crisis of information but a crisis of decision. We live with the myth that, if only our governments had the proper information, it would be used, it would be acted upon (1975, 24).

Experts, researchers, and commission members seldom agree. This is because they do not deal purely with matters of information or fact. When it comes to problems and issues involving *people*, they must be concerned with *values*. It is the values we embrace—by fiat or default or unthinking agreement or consciously and with a will—which shape the natures and qualities of both our selves and our society.

What I am urging is that leaders to whom these images of personal growth and of fulfilling communities of human relation sound good begin to mull over them, to elaborate on them, and to act on them. There has never been any shortage of ideas about what to do or about how to go about something differently. There has been a shortage of persons willing to take the risks and effort involved in actually trying different ways and means. There has been an even bigger shortage of persons willing to give others room for risking and trying new ways. Yet there are more and more such persons emerging—among women, among oppressed minorities, among corporate 'dropouts,' and persons seeking and creating more humane schooling, health care, and ways of doing business. Remember, as you continue your efforts to realize images of greater being and more fulfilling human community, you are not alone.

First Steps

There are two basic steps which I see as useful in striving to recreate our lives. Although they can be taken separately, they can also be taken together. One is to stop and reflect, to look within, to take stock, to see/feel/think about whence you have come, where you want to go, and how you might start moving. The other step is an outward reflection of this inner process. That is, finding one or more other persons with whom to share and thereby give reality and concreteness to your efforts.

Seeing Your Self

Allen Wheelis speaks to the implications of the information myth when he says, 'As truth is lost, intentions become more important' (1959, 111). Thus, we find that some 'information' is necessary in order to act. That necessary 'information' is our intentions, our purposes, our desires, our values.

Mary Richards believes:

> Life is an art, for our social practices are embodiments of inner pictures and of inner feeling. Like art, life projects an inner world. What pictures do we have of ourselves? Let us get to know the elements in ourselves which govern our choices. This is a lifetime's artistic labor...The discipline of the artist is to know his materials (1974, 138).

One simple way of taking stock is over the course of a few days to write down and describe some of the areas of your life that you wish were different. These might touch on work, family, school, friends, relatives' relations, or something entirely different.

Then a good way to consider these matters is to draw or paint or crayon or mold them in clay. If, for example, you feel frustrated in your work, find some quiet space and image with your eyes closed or directly on paper or in clay what your frustration looks like, its shape, its color, its texture. This form of expression often goes deeper than mere verbal/intellectual modes and taps into your emotions and more subconscious feelings. However, once you have graphically expressed your images, you may be surprised at what you can discover about yourself by thinking about them or sharing them through a verbal explanation with someone else.

At the same time or after graphically and verbally expressing arenas for transformation, consider how you would like these 'things' or relations to be different. What would be ideal?

Then with these two images, you can imagine further and try to graphically work out a third—one that bridges and merges your present situation with your ideal.

This is one means of looking at your self and beginning to form new starting points. Richards describes it as a process of examining your 'values and procedures which tend to have been inherited automatically from the system,' and then getting in touch with your own feelings and interests, and developing confidence in your self as source(1974, 139).

In the previous chapter, I have illustrated that, to a great extent, we are our own creations. What we believe consciously or nonconsciously through our cultural habits shapes us. In this context then, we are each faced with the question Richards asks: "When we can do what we want to do, what do we do?" She continues: "This question is a doorway into the unknown, into a new way of working, into self-creation...For we find that we can get in our own way if we are not careful. Our unwillingness to imagine change is a projection of the distance we are keeping from our own inner fears" (1974, 168, 164).

Richards reminds us that the child in each of us is our "growing tip, alive throughout our lifespan." And the adult in us each is

> a friend to wholeness and to differentiation in consciousness and practice. One of the labors of adulthood is to befriend in ourselves those handicapped and underdeveloped pans of our nature which we have set aside. I call this my 'philosophy of the dropped stitches.' The time comes when they call out to be picked up and included and nourished and woven in as part of our humanity, each with its special contribution to lifevision (1974, 148).

Richards sees "...learning as lifelong—in rhythms of learning, unlearning, relearning." She also sees "all authority in vested institutions" as dimming. "Authority is being transformed, it is being internalized and reborn in the individual conscience of persons. Person as author, as actor, as participant" (1974,159).

Yet it is not always easy to see your self in new ways. Richards offers this example:

> I created a stir at the Curriculum Laboratory in London by wanting to discuss administration as an art. One headmaster shouted angrily, 'There's nothing creative about administration.' I was tenacious in questioning why he refused even to consider himself as an artist. Finally he said, 'Because artists are special and I'm not special. There, you've made me say it.' Our pictures of ourselves! Once we become aware of bias, we can undertake change. (1974,149).

In other words, when you become conscious and aware of your own values and their implications in your living, you can make a choice whether to maintain them or change.

There is another process that would likely be helpful to many readers in continuing their own transformation and self-renewal. That is the *Intensive Journal* developed by Ira Progoff from his years of collecting more actualizing persons' life-histories and of working with patients in psychotherapy. He describes the Intensive Journal process like this:

> The Intensive Journal is specifically designed to provide an instrument and techniques by which persons can discover within themselves the resources they did not know they possessed...
>
> It systematically evokes and strengthens the inner capacities of persons...It establishes a person's sense of his own being by enriching his inner life with new experiences of a creative and spiritual quality...
>
> When our reliance is upon things or people outside of ourselves, we are not drawing upon the strengths that are inherent within us and, what is more important, we are not developing them further. The progressive strengthening of our inherent capacities gives us a resource that draws upon itself, and that is, therefore, self-sustaining and self-amplifying...
>
> As we use it to place ourselves, the workshop becomes for us a mid-point in the movement of our lives, a moment in time that is midway between our past and our future. Insofar as the past is over and the future has not yet transpired, this midpoint is an open moment of possibility. Properly used, it becomes like the eye of a hurricane, a quiet place at the center of life, a free, unconditioned moment of opportunity (1975,10, 9,15,14).

Readers who are interested can pursue this independently through Progoff's book - *At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal*- or by attending one of the **Dialogue House Journal Workshops** given regularly around the country ...

Beginning my own Intensive Journal after separating from my former wife, I made it about halfway through Progoff's book before the demands of this study forced me to shift my energies. I see much strength in the process, however, and plan to return to it soon.

One other guide that you might find useful is a simple and direct book put together by two staff members from the Center for the Studies of the Person, Anthony L. Rose and Andre Auw. They explain the purposes and content of their book:

> As authors, our first hope is that *Growing Up Human* will cause you to take a fresh look at your life and to initiate changes for the better. We believe in you. We know that you have the power and the resources to transform yourself and your community. We trust that, if you are tuned in to your basic human nature, that transformation will enrich us all...
>
> We have intoned ideas, described events, offered suggestions, invented exercises. The rest is up to you. We can do no more than set the stage. It is you who must do the seeking and experience the change (1974, ix, xi).

Finally, here are two books by Laura Huxley which are packed with techniques and exercises for getting in touch with and revitalizing your self: You *Are Not the Target* (1968) and *Recipes for Living and Loving Between Heaven and Earth* (1976).

Sharing the Self You See

The other basic step which I would recommend to readers desirous of recreating some aspects of your selves and your lives is to find one or more other persons with whom to mutually share your inward journeying. This will reflect your inner processes outward and thereby give them more concreteness and realness. Because your thoughts and feelings and plans are shared, they will take on more reality than if they are simply your own inner imaginings which you lay aside or forget whenever you enter into relations with other persons.

In my own efforts to grow and create different ways for my being, I have found that my commitments to change and transformation are deepened and strengthened when I am able to make a covenant with someone who has similar goals. Through dialogue and mutual feedback we are both enriched. Even with inner fears and feelings which I thought might be 'too weird' or might lead to rejection, when I have shared them with someone with whom I share a covenant of growth, I have grown from the process. Personally, I find it difficult to act in isolation and without such a covenant. Even though the person with whom I share commitment to goals of educational transformation has lived twelve hundred miles from me for the past six years, we are able to maintain our bonds and to draw on their strength when we encounter periods of difficulty and doubt.

Richards speaks to the importance of sharing and making social our commitments when she suggests that 'we need to create opportunities for awakening and practicing our initiative and self-trust, becoming comfortable with it and with the initiative of others....Less frequently do we find a place to practice changing direction, to practice in feedback sessions how to learn from experience...(1974, 139, 140).

Two or more people gathered together can create such a place or space for practicing their evolving beliefs. As Pearce remarked, two or three people agreeing on possibilities creates a culture. Such groups are being 'cultured' in many realms and locations in American society today. In the sections below for parents, teachers and educational administrators, I suggest some ways of making contact with such groups.

Guides for Parents

If you are planning to become a parent or are considering having another child, I would suggest that you take a look at *Birth Without Violence* by Frederick LeBoyer. (19 74) . LeBoyer recommends creating a setting for childbirth which eases the transition from womb to world in gentle and welcoming ways. Babies born this way often do not cry. Rather than beginning their post-uterine life with screams and contorted faces, they start out relaxed and most often with smiles. The LeBoyer method is not complicated or difficult. It includes such practices as dimming the harsh lights and loud sounds in the delivery room, letting the child rest on the mother's abdomen for a few moments before severing the umbilical cord, and then placing the child in a body temperature bath. Follow-up studies on children born this way indicate that they are less anxious and fearful and more outgoing and emberant.

If you have infant and preschool-age children, you might find some useful ideas about nurturing the potentials of your children in two excellent books on child development. One is *Child Alive(1975),* a collection of articles edited by Roger Lewin on recent findings about the timing and phases of different abilities in children. The other *is Magical Child: Rediscovering Nature's Plan for Our Children (1977),* by Joseph Chilton Pearce, whose earlier works I used in developing the previous chapter.

If your children are not getting along with each other or with you, there are two simple but effective tactics which can improve your relations. I have found that, when one or both of my children get testy and grumpy, it often helps for them to draw pictures for awhile. It doesn't matter what they draw; it can be anything they want. Yet both my wife and I have often been amazed at how much improved our children's social behavior is after a very short period of such free expression where they are wholly in charge of what and how they express. The effects of this kind of activity often carry well into the next day.

Another tactic which I have found useful was recommended to me by an alternative school director who was especially sensitive to the connections between nutrition and behavior. She had noticed that around eleven each morning, many children started to get the grumps and other kinds of disruptive behavior. From her knowledge of nutrition, she speculated that this might be connected with a drop in their blood sugar and with their bodies being ready for lunch. She found that, by serving orange or apple slices just before eleven, the great majority of behavior problems was eliminated. My wife and I have also used such nutritional 'snacks' to help our children maintain more constructive behavior, especially in the hour before dinner.

Parents who want to begin opening your family relations in ways that will help further nurture your children's growth could try starting a family council or meeting process much like that used at Lewis Wadhams School. In chapter two of his latest book, Rogers describes what happened when one family began using such process.

> The mother of this family felt like she was having to nag or remind her children to pick up their things too much of the time. She brought this to the family meeting and the children came up with the idea of having a 'disappearing box' into which belongings left in the common living space would be put and banished from use for one week. Over the course of the following week, the mother lost all but one pair of her shoes to the box, and discovered 'that every problem is largely in the eye of the beholder. Her shoes had not been 'a household mess,' but the children's things obviously were. To learn that she too 'makes a mess' is a painful lesson. But now the power is truly equalized and experienced as such' (Rogers, 1977, 41).

The approach of such a more open and flexible family system is for each member of the family to not only share their points of view and feelings, but also to try to understand and consider those of the other members as well. Rogers explains:

> If this sounds like a completely child-centered family, it is not. The parent has feelings and attitudes too, and

> tries to communicate these to the child in a way this smaller person can understand...Because they are continually aware of many of their own feelings and those of their parents and because these feelings have been expressed and accepted, the children develop as highly...responsive to other people, open in expressing their feelings, scornful of being talked down to, creative and independent in their activities...
>
> I don't wish to paint too rosy a picture. I have seen some of these parents forget, temporarily, that they have rights, with resultant spoiling of the child. I have seen parents and children revert temporarily to the old ways - the parent commanding, the child resisting. Both parents and children are sometimes exhausted and react badly. There are always frictions and difficulties to be communicated and worked through. But all in all, in these families we find parent and child in a continuous process of relating, a developing series of changes whose final outcome is not known but is being shaped by an infinite number of daily choices and actions. The politics of control and obedience, with its pleasing static security, is gone. The politics of a process relationship between unique persons, a very different politics, takes its place (1977, 30, 31).

You may think that your children are too young to begin such a process. However, do not underestimate their abilities. Often we do too much for our children. They learn responsibility by being given it and by making mistakes. Forgetting to feed their pet goldfish or to change its water, they let it die. Sometimes it is harder to hold back and let children learn from such an experience than it is to intercede and save the goldfish!

Another guide which might be useful for readers wanting to improve their relations with their children, their mates, their parents, or other loved ones is Everett Shostrom's *Man the Manipulator: The Inner Journey from Manipulation to Actualization.*. Shostrom describes manipulative and actualizing ways of interaction and how to transform one's behavior towards actualizing through such topics as types of manipulative children, the manipulative parent, methods and a theory of discipline, the actualizing parent, the actualizing parents' bill of rights, teen ways of manipulating parents, parent manipulations of teenagers, actualizing parent-adolescent relationships, manipulative vs. actuatizing love, and marital fighting.

If you begin to notice your child dying in certain respects—becoming less creative and enthusiastic, dreading school, thinking of learning as work—you may want to take more drastic steps. When Mario Fantini noticed such behaviors in his son who was in the third grade, he went to school to try to get his son moved to another class one in which the teacher's teaching style might coincide more with his son's learning style. Fantini was told that this was not possible. He considered moving to another school district, but then he decided to see if other parents might be facing similar problems. So he and his wife held 'coffee klatches' with other parents. Out of this they formed a group which could exert pressure and demand that the public schools they supported with their tax dollars make some attempts to provide the kinds of educational choices and options they desired. Fantini has written two books that may be useful for parents wanting to create more educational options for their children. One is *What's Best for the Children?—Resolving the Power Struggle Between Parents and Teacher* (1974). The other is a reader packed with articles about philosophy, politics, experiences, evaluation, financing, and other aspects of alternative schools, including providing alternatives within a single school building. It is entitled: Alternative Education: A Source Book for Parents, Teachers, Students, and Administrators (1976).

In addition, there are two national organizations designed to assist parents concerned about their children's school life—the **Institute for Responsive Education** and the **National Committee for Citizens in Education.** Both groups offer personal assistance, as well as publishing newsletters...

Two other books which might be of interest to both parents and teachers are *Half the House* (1974) by Herbert Kohl and *Does Anybody Give a Damn?: Nat Hentoff, on Education* (1977). Kohl shares his own learnings, frustrations and struggles in his efforts to change himself, his way of life and the schools in such a way that we can each learn from his experiences. Hentoff, on the other hand chronicles the horrors which are far too often the norm in large urban schools. But he also describes some very humane and excitingly successful ways that some people have developed for nurturing their students' growth and learning.

As my studies of the St. Paul Open School and Open Junior High illustrate, parents can successfully unite to demand the kinds of schooling they desire. Although it takes a tremendous amount of energy and effort, it can be done. In the case of the St. Paul Open School, about twenty-five core people built an organization with several thousand members to convince the school board that parents' needs could only be met by creation of an open school.

If you are a parent wanting to begin acting more on these images of personal fulfillment and openness, it is important that you both trust and have faith in your child. Too often, when a child has difficulty with a subject, such as math or reading, many of us assume that the problem lies with the child—she or he is slow, not talented in that area, lazy, or whatever. Yet the source of the problem can often be found in the kind and style of learning setting which the child's teacher creates.

For example, by the second week of the second grade, my son thoroughly detested anything connected with verbal language reading, writing or spelling. He began making comments that he was "dumb." This self-image was not helped any by the fact that his sister, who is only a year older, was already an avid reader. My wife and I considered keeping him out of school one day a week so that we could help him acquire more language skills through some of the organic and fun ways described by Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1972). But after talking with my son's teacher, we discovered more about the problem. A humorless woman who demanded quiet, order and "eyes front," the teacher had decided that our son was "slow" and put him in the lowest reading group. We discovered, however, that this woman's teaching method was simple and direct—the ditto work sheet. Except for recess, reading groups, and special once-a-week classes like art and music, all of her students spent their time sitting at their desks penciling away on worksheets. My son was not slow in language ability. He was bored! Moreover, he is a mover (the kind of person some people mistakenly call "hyperactive"). He likes to sing and jiggle while he learns. Studies have shown that different people emphasize different senses for their chief learning mode. Movers almost always have to touch, feel, sing and gesture in order to acquire concepts.

Anyway, realizing that our son was in a situation destructive to his growth in self-esteem, much less his language ability, my wife and I searched out a different kind of public school in which we were lucky enough to get him enrolled. We took him to visit the new school for what we thought would be a half-hour taste to see if he would like it. But after meeting his new teachers and casing out the set-up, he didn't want to leave! He discovered that you got to sit and play on the floor, to work at tables, to talk while you worked, to move to different teachers for different subject areas, to have more recesses, to go to and from lunch without marching in lines, and to call the principal by his first name. When we picked him up after that first day at his new school, he had a library book he'd found on race cars. My wife and I were shocked—this choosing his own book was a first. My purpose in this lengthy story is to illustrate that you can do your child a great disservice by not believing in his or her potentials and by allowing teachers or school officials to define the problem as being with your child when it could just as easily be with the learning setting. As a parent, you surely know your child better than most people. Don't accept limiting definitions of her or him if they contradict your own gut knowledge. If your child begins to have trouble with or at school, go and visit his or her class. Visit other classes and other schools. Use your intuition and reason to feel what might be better. Then go to bat to secure it.

This all points to some other implications of more open and fulfillment nurturing processes for the ways you regard your children and their schooling. One of these concerns grades. If you are trying to encourage your children to find and pursue the things that genuinely interest them - that is, to become more inner valuing and self directing person - you will not pressure them to achieve. They must make 'A's' or learn to read at age five or learn algebra in fourth grade because they want to satisfy themselves, not because they want to satisfy you or your wishes for them to 'perform' better than your neighbors' children. For if they learn that your affection and valuing of them hinges on their fulfilling your expectations, they are liable to lose touch with their true selves and eventually grow to resent you for teaching them to look outside their selves for reward, approval and happiness.

Finally, parents who decide to take the bold step of holding their child out of school altogether may wish to confer with the **National Association for the Legal Support of Alternative Schools...** In some states, such action does not violate compulsory school attendance laws if you are a certified teacher. One way around such laws is to enroll your child in a 'school' which 'teaches' through correspondence.' NALSAS can put you in touch with such schools. NALSAS also offers assistance to persons trying to establish nonpublic alternative schools and to persons who become subject to harassment from fire and building code inspectors over such technicalities as the height of their ceilings or the size of their bathrooms.

Guide for Teachers

For teachers who desire to move away from roles as information dispensing authority figures and toward being facilitators of learning, there are many resources available. Again, starting with an inner process of getting in touch with where you are and where you would like to be is important. In addition to the case study chapter above, bouncing your beliefs and feelings off some of the excellent books suggested below is one way to continue getting in touch with your present and desired values and purposes.

Freedom to Learn (1969) by Carl Rogers and *Teachers as Learning: Becoming Alive and Free in Teaching(1972)* by Clark Moustakas are both packed with ideas and practical applications for teachers. In *Towards a Technology for Humanizing Education (1972),* David Aspy describes specific values and behavior through which teachers can open up their classrooms to increased personal growth and learning for both themselves and their students. William Glasser, in *Schools without Failure(1975),* illustrates how much 'problem' and 'low achieving' students can be nurtured through creating participatory and caring learning environments. Finally, nearly all of John Holt's books are crammed with ideas and practical suggestions. I would especially recommend *The Underachieving School (1972)* and *What Do I Do Monday?* (1972).

In a different, but also valuable, vein are personal accounts of ·transformation. In addition to Kohl's *Half the House(1974), I* would suggest several others. *Homework: Required Reading for Teachers and Parents* (1972) by Gloria Channon tells of Channon's joys and struggles when, after ten years of teaching in traditional ways, she consciously began to drop some of the constraints and restrictions she had been placing on her self and on her students. With humor and compassion, James Herndon describes his classroom efforts in *How to Survive in Your Native Land (1971).* Sylvia Ashton-Warner's personal accounts of her 'organic' teaching style, offered in such books as *Teacher* (1971), *Spearpoint: Teacher in America* (1972), and *Spinster* (1958), a novel, are both a joy and an inspiration to read. As a rich and warm description of how a whole school can be organized and practiced based on notions of freedom and personal growth, George Dennison's *The Lives of Children: The Story of the First Street School* (1969) is a classic.

Finally, two books which are useful guides with exercises and techniques for nurturing your students' growth in the many important and powerful areas beyond our simple rational or cognitive abilities are: *Learning to Be: The Education of Human Potential* (1974) by John Mann and *Transpersonal Education: A Curriculum for Feeling and Being* (1976) edited by Gay Hendricks and James Fadiman.

Of course few, if any, people ever change simply by reading a book. Reading, reflecting, and toying with ideas is only a (not necessarily the) way to begin.

I would encourage teachers interested in trying to change their actions to be consistent with more open and humanistic beliefs to go 'shopping.' Ask around. Find out which teachers and which schools have a reputation for doing different and exciting things. Ask students at your own and other schools who they think are good teachers and why. Then go and visit people and places. If you have found a colleague to share in your journey of transformation, go on visits together. If time and circumstances allow, go beyond simply 'observing' and ask to help, to participate.

Although many people working in alternative schools have somewhat narrow and provincial attitudes about people who are not as 'advanced' in philosophy or practice as themselves, those who have taken their values to heart will be more friendly. Of course, everyone gets busy and harried at times. Don't be easily discouraged.

While you are visiting, you will likely find some things that bother, disturb or just plain scare you. The students may seem to be turning wild. Noise levels may be at least ten times greater than you are used to tolerating. Whatever comes up like this, try to talk with someone about it. Be careful not to attack or be overly critical. If something disturbs or puzzles you, inquire about its purpose. Ask how the practice or situation developed. And ask the teachers and/or students how they got used to the practice. Try to learn from others' experiences. If you live in or near a large urban area, there may be a 'teacher dropout center' where you can look for people and dialogue.

Approach your departmental chairperson and/or administrator and tell them of your desires to grow and of your need to visit other teachers and other programs. Suggest that teacher aids, student teachers, or substitutes take over your class or classes for a morning or an afternoon every once in a while. If this approach doesn't gain cooperation, you will be forced to make a choice about how firm your commitment to transformation is and about the kinds of risks you are willing to take to pursue your goals. You may have to become more 'subversive' and to get 'sick' in order to pursue your learning through visits. Or you may have to restrict your travels to early dismissal or in service days and sneak away. James Herndon recommends holding to your beliefs and, when you can't get standard practices changed, subvert them.

But remember that 'all the information' will never be 'in.' Sooner or later you must begin to act if your new values are to genuinely mean anything to you or others. Certainly, a part of your acting will involve shifting your teaching style from the traditional 'information theory' approach whereby students regard you as the authority (and perhaps you regard the state 'curriculum specialists' as your authority) who is responsible for telling them what they need to know.

This is sometimes called the 'gas pump' approach to education. That is, students come in, get their 'tanks' filled and leave. Others have used computer jargon to call it a 'garbage in/garbage out' process in which students come in, take notes, spit them back out on tests and get graded. In most colleges and universities the 'gas pump' approach turns into the 'grocery cart' method where students push their carts around the university supermarket selecting what they want (or are told they need) from the shelves until they get enough to merit 'checking out.'

The problem with all these approaches is that the 'goods' are prepackaged—in lectures, textbooks or however. Transforming towards more open and growth nurturing values and practices demands that you, the teacher, become something of an 'organic gardener' where your students are 'seedlings' planted in the humanly rich and resource fertile 'ground' of your classroom or school or community.

Richards describes this kind of 'organic' learning approach as leading towards personal 'wholeness:'

> One part of wholeness is initiative, a trust in oneself as source. In school this is commonly repressed, through working in a onesided way with books, authority figures, and social pressure; or in being too selflessly concerned with serving students. We tend to think that responsibility to others means either deferring to them, or doing everything for them, thinking nothing of ourselves. The roles that are stressed are those of dependency and authority. But how about give and take? How about flexibility of role, autonomy, self-trust, reciprocity? How about doing things not for others but with them? (1974, 137).

Aspy and Rogers have found through research and experience that there are three qualities of teachers which promote personal growth and more involved learning among students. They have also found that teachers can learn to develop and increase these qualities through training and practice. One of these qualities is being a genuine and authentic person. This means sharing your feelings and thinkings and doubts and joys with your students on a person-to-person basis, rather than within teacher-to-student role limitations. Another quality is the teacher's ability to empathize with the feelings and experiences of his or her students. This includes trying to understand and put yourself into students' points of view. The third important quality is that of prizing and accepting with 'unconditional positive regard' every student as a valuable and worthwhile person. However, this is not to say that you cannot get angry with or dislike certain of their actions. See Aspy (1972, 1974) for more details.

Richards describes a summer institute for teachers in which she learned the importance of listening and empathizing and accepting: 'At the beginning we were often at odds with one another. We felt we were talking different languages. We resisted each other's meanings. It is often difficult for us, who are teachers accustomed to talking while others listen, to listen to each other without wishing to win points, and to co-operate with each other as co-creators of meaning' (1974, 80). Yet, if you want to create a more democratic open and dialogical setting for your own and your students' growth, genuine listening and co-making of meaning are necessary processes to employ.

At any rate, it is important that you begin trying things in your own teaching. There is no need to wait until you are well versed in ideas. Begin! Explain to your students that you want to 'change the rules' so to speak. Give them some ideas of the directions you want to move and begin to dialogue with them as to possible whys and ways. Believe in them and their abilities to explore and to pursue their own learning paths through self-chosen means.

This will not be as easy, for many students will probably not believe in your sincerity. They will test you. They will abuse new freedoms and privileges. They will try to see how far they can push before you will step in and try to control in your old style.

Hold out; it's worth it! Many of the books which I suggested above offer case examples of what people have done in their own transitioning at both elementary and secondary levels. Rogers and Holt are particularly good in this respect. Glasser offers several chapters on how to begin using meeting and dialogue processes to help your classroom come alive.

Another technique towards holistic and self-directed learning is that of having students create, design and carry through projects—as individuals, in teams, as a class, or as a school.

Once you abandon your ideas that you must prescribe what can and should be learned, you will fmd it easier to tune in to your students' interests and help them be explored and experienced. Becoming less concerned with control, you will be amazed at what happens.

Richards describes what happened when an English school picked the theme of "green" and took a month "to develop it in all different ways and then...end in a festival celebration of exhibits and performances:"

> ...Older boys made a big construction which they painted green and called a monster of jealousy, and they made up a kind of drama of gang rivalry, which they acted and danced for their schoolmates. These were big boys from various difficult backgrounds who had been hard to handle. They were bored in school and angry. Their experience of creating something of their own, a personal political artistic use of physical energy, seemed to lead into more harmony with themselves and their school environment. And the teachers lost their fear of them (1974, 146).

Also, I would urge you not to automatically assume that administrators will be against your efforts. Rogers presents some notes from a language arts teacher who decided to redirect her classes in more person-centered ways. After imagining her students gossiping something like "Mrs. Carr is going to let us do anything we want, and what's more we get to grade ourselves," she went to the department head and principal and explained to them what she was trying. "Their cooperative and interested responses convinced me that we teachers often use the 'administration won't let us' excuse for our own supposed lack of freedom" (in Rogers, 1977, 77).

For administrators who are skeptical and dubious, there is a wealth of philosophical and anecdotal material available as a fraction of which was listed above) which with "soften them up." If they want more "hard" or quantitative research evidence, refer them to Aspy (1974,1972) or read Aspy yourself and make a presentation at the next faculty meeting. You might be interested to find which other teachers are willing to join your efforts and which are at least sympathetic.

Should you form a strong group for transformation that includes administrators and parents and students, you may wish to look into **Individually Guided Education** (IGE). IGE is a process for opening and humanizing a school. It starts with workshops and experiences for taking stock of values and goals and then continues by helping you reorganize to better achieve them. Other than that spent on planning booklets and filmstrips, IGE costs no more money than your current programs. IGE is not something you buy. It is a process in which you engage and do yourself. For more information about this process in which more than twelve hundred schools are engaged, write to **the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities** (IDEA) ...

Guides for Educational Administrators

Many of the ways of changing student/teacher relations which I mentioned in the previous section apply also to administrators' relations with both staff and students. (By 'administrators' in this section I refer chiefly to school building administrators; however, upper echelon administrators should be able to extrapolate implications for their ways of working and relating from these guides as well.)

One of the first outward steps administrators can take is to let your feelings and inner urgings for change be known. Share with your staff, students and parents your openness to their trying different goals and different practices. You can set the tone for dialogue and transformation of not only your self, but for those around you. As Laura points out, 'when we change, others change too and circumstances change in a manner that is almost miraculous' (1968, 8).

I would suggest that you, also, visit other schools and other programs. If your budget allows, you might consider turning this process around and inviting people from other schools to come and offer seminars and planning assistance with your school participants. Let them know that parents and students are welcome on their team.

Begin processes of dialogue at all levels—involving everyone in your school in the defining and redefining of what learning and schooling should be. You yourself need not have all the details thought or worked out before 'presenting' them. (If you do, it's a surefire way for them to fail.) You will be surprised at the good ideas and strengths which will emerge when staff and students and parents shed their roles and begin working together on common problems and common goals. Remember to talk less and listen more.

Do not worry about losing authority and respect. For as happens when teachers put more power and trust in the hands of students, you will gain more respect and need less authority when you involve more persons in making and carrying out decisions for themselves.

One good topic around which to focus the beginnings of such a process is the goals and purposes of your school. Meetings involving large groups can be broken into small groups of parents, students, teachers and administrators to discuss and work on problems. Then each small group can report out its ideas agreements and disagreements to the body as a whole. Through such dialogical processes, the clients and participants in a school can become involved in its evaluation and transformation in ways far more significant than mere statistics or test scores.

Your first reaction to the idea of sharing decision-making and power may be to think that it would never work, that strong and centralized leadership is necessary in order to run an organization as large and complex as most schools are these days. However, Rogers states that "it has been substantiated that leaders who trust organization members, who share and diffuse power, and who maintain open personal communication have better morale, have more productive organizations, and facilitate the development of new leaders" (1977, 289). This is soundly supported by many of the reading sources which I suggest below.

Rogers states that "it has been discovered that the most powerful stance one can take in any relationship is, paradoxically, to leave responsible power in the hands of each person or each group." And "where power is unequal, or where one is perceived as more powerful the teacher or administrator are examples - the first steps must be taken by the perceived leader, the perceived power" (1977,139).

Now all this may sound as if your job as an administrator and as a professional will be made obsolete through these processes. This is not so. However, your role will shift. Just as the role of the professional teacher shifts from instiller of facts to gatherer of resources, creator of potential learning situations, and guide, counselor and friend of learners (including other teachers), so does the role of the administrator shift from that of dictator of policy and shaper or order to advocate and facilitator of the desires of all of the school clientele and workers.

This does not necessarily mean that everyone's desires can be satisfied through the programs and persons in your particular school. However, it does mean that your goals and programs will become more flexible. There is no inherent necessity for uniform programs within a school. To permit the majority to dictate the shape of the whole school is not democracy. It is a dictatorship which results in the tyranny and oppression of minority groups and their goals. Why can't one teacher, or six, or whatever number who desire, be given the tolerance and respect to try another way? Why can't several groups within a school organize around different assumptions, different goals, and different practices? Preservation of diversity and individual uniqueness is what characterizes a democracy. To some extent, such diversity already exists in the different teaching styles employed behind the doors of each classroom. Why not legitimize such differences, bring them out in the open, and begin sharing and learning from each other? There is nothing to lose except fear and paranoia. People in schools need not compete with each other if they recognize that every person has valuable strengths as well as human weaknesses. Above all, remember that your institution is designed to serve people. Persons' unique and individual needs should take precedence over set procedures and standard practices and expectations of behavior.

All these things sound simple. They are not. They are difficult and they involve taking risks. Yet the rewards are greater than the risks. Once you begin to do any of these things, they start getting easier. As you involve others in the process of dialogue and transformation, more ideas and actions will be generated.

Finally here are a few books which you may find helpful.

Two excellent ones to start with are *Synergic Power: Beyond Domination and Permissiveness* (1974) by James H. and Marge Craig and *Synergetics: An Adventure in Human Development* (1976) by Norman Coulter, Jr. The Craigs explore themes similar to those I have developed here, but with the emphasis on the needs and ways for developing cooperative rather than competitive organizations. Coulter describes a series of processes for developing what he calls the 'synergic mode' of functioning whereby people can draw upon increased powers of cooperation and creativity both personally and in groups and discussions.

Three books which discuss the needs for and processes of educational change are *The Dynamics of Educational Change*

Towards Responsive Schools(1975) by John I. Goodlad, *Schools in Transition: The Practitioner as Change Agent* (1975) by Kenneth A. Tye and Jerrold M. Novotney, and *The Power to Change: Issues for the Innovative Educator* (1973) edited by Carmen M. Culver and Gary J. Hoban. A central idea in these volumes is that district administrators, school board members and persons from schools and their communities need to engage in 'continuous and serious dialogue about the purposes of schooling' and how these purposes relate to what they are doing (Tye and Novotney, 1975,148).

There are also a number of helpful works on ways to humanize organizations and their management. One classic among them is Abraham Maslow's *Eupsychian Management: A Journal* (1965). The Journal is a record of Maslow's ideas, suggestions and speculations formulated while he spent a summer as 'a sort of Visiting Fellow at the **Non-Linear Systems,** Inc. plant' at the invitation of the company president. Another classic is *The Human Side of Enterprise* by Douglas McGregor (1960). McGregor's book was one of the 'textbooks' that formed the charter of Non-Linear Systems. Lastly, the work of Chris Argyris has also been pioneering in the realm. *Personality and Organization: The Conflict Between System and the Individual* (1957),

Integrating the Individual and the Organization 1966), and *Organization and Innovation* (1965) are all packed with pertinent analysis and case materials which you might find useful. One of Argyris' more recent books, authored with Donald A. Schon, should be of special interest to educational administrators. Titled *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (1976), it describes how we operate on 'theories of action,' how to diagnose our 'theories-in-use,' how to transition toward and learn behavior appropriate for more open organizations (which they call 'Model II'), and the implications for professional education of these ideas and experiences.

A Few More Rousers

Here are three highly provocative books which strike to the heart of the issues involved in taking charge of the quality of your experiences and of your life: *Tools for Conviviality* (1973) by Ivan Illich, *Reclaiming the American Dream* (1965) by Richard C. Cornuelle, and *Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better* (1976) by John Holt.

Illich traces the takeover of more and more of our lives by modern institutions of medicine, education, industry, government and law. He then describes how recovery of our lives can be accomplished.

Cornuelle uses basic American values of independent work and action to look at the failure of the independent sector' and the concomitant growth of large-scale corporations and government into monopolistic and inefficient institutions. Then he suggests guidelines for strengthening the independent sector and thereby increasing the realization of a free and democratic society.

In what some people might consider his most radical book to date, Holt begins by stating: 'this is a book in favor of doing - self directed, purposeful, meaningful life and work - and against 'education' - learning cut off from active life and done under pressure of bribe or threat, greed and fear' (1976, 3).

Several other books are sure to spark your imagination, arouse your anger, or win your admiration of their authors. Here are two books about people who have taken the risk and made the leap from unsatisfying work towards creating new patterns of work and life which they find more fulfilling. If you are on the brink, they may help you feel less alone and give you some ideas in which directions you might jump: *New Work/New Life: Help Yourself to Tomorrow: A Report from People Already There* by Laile E. Bartlett (1976) and *Breaking Out of a Job You Don't Like*...and *The Regimented Life* by Don Biggs (1 973).

Another book which should help you feel less alone in your personal strivings towards transformation is *The Everyman Project: Resources for a Humane Future* (1977) by Robert Jungk. Jungk, a German author, demonstrates that trends toward more open and humane ways of organizing our selves and our purposes are visible among people all over the world. He enumerates these trends in all aspects of society and speculates as to their implications for our futures.

In *Dear America*, Karl Hess (1975), a former Goldwater speechwriter turned pacifo-anarchist, offers a libertarian critique of American society and shares ways to create participatory democracy and decentralize industry and technology, as well as government, so that people can become the authors of their own experience.

And finally, in a fictional scenario of a possible present called *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* (1975), Ernest Callenbach describes some ways that a humane and ecologically conscious society might look.

Many valuable resources for exploring and practicing your transformation can be found through the **Association for Humanistic Psychology...** Besides its annual meeting, AHP often has regional meetings which pull together the talents of many persons who are on the cutting edge of humanistic thought and action. Most sessions at these meetings go beyond lectures to involve the participants in discussion and practice of new ways of being.

Continuing Your Beginnings

Richards points out that 'it is not the structure of an institution that makes the differences, nor curriculum nor grades nor degree nor intellect nor arts nor sciences, but the values and behavior or persons' (1974, 156). Acting on different values, we can transform our selves and our relationships. But it is not easy.

> You need new arts of initiative and of judgment and of making agreements. It cannot be done any longer by fiat, or by an appeal to protocol or procedures...The danger in letting things go their own way is that they follow the inertia of old habits' (Richards, 1974, 167).

Like learning to play the piano or to type, we must consciously practice until new patterns are formed and integrated so that we act from them with less effort. No amount of reading or thinking by itself can transform our ways of being, just as reading about playing the piano is no substitute for the experience of playing.

Such new patterns and habits for acting are at a different level than our old ones. Rogers reminds us that they form a 'process base for wise action...not a static authority base.' The process is one of continually 'testing hypotheses in thought and action, discarding some, but following others.' We come to recognize that there is no such thing as static truth or objective scientific 'knowledge' (Rogers, 1977, 250). Rather, we come to trust in a changing series of approximations and practices which work, in any given context, toward our ideals.

Becoming people who passionately live our inner values, we can begin to 'ride our lives like natural beasts, like tempests, like the bounce of a ball or the slightest ambiguous hovering of ash, the drift of scent: let us stick to those currents that carry us, remembering them with our souls' (Richards, 1975, 7).

These excerpts are taken from* Free Forming: Greater Personal Fulfillment Through Living Democracy, *by Robert Skenes, a project funded by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, and reproduced in part with kind permission of the author.

Robert Skenes teaches future teachers at the National College of Education at its North Virginia Center in McLean, Virginia. It is very comforting to remember that such an insightful, highly gifted, well-informed and thoughtful teacher as Robert is in a position to influence and teach students who may become future teachers!

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by Jenifer Goldman, Solomon Press

(see review above)

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Reprinted materials from our two trips to Russia, and articles written by participants of the most recent teacher-training seminar in Moscow and Narva, Estonia.

VIDEOS BY JERRY MINTZ (for $25):

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION IN THE SOVIET UNION

An hour and a half documentary of our trip to the First New Schools Festival, in the Crimea, USSR, concluding one day before the coup. Includes excerpts from the train trip from London to Moscow, a tour of Moscow, meetings in the Ministry of Education and Yeltsin's White House, the conference in the Crimea, with a demonstration of democratic decision-making with Russian students, detailed descriptions and demonstrations by the Stork Family School, a parent cooperative in the Ukrain.

TEACHER TRAINING SEMINAR IN RUSSIA AND ESTONIA. '92

This is the video of one of the most amazing seminars we have ever experienced, with involvement of 7 American students, including 3 homeschoolers, 4 alternative school teachers, 25 Russian children, 125 Russian teachers, our presentations of democratic decision-making, workshops given by our students, trips to Tallin, the capital of Estonia, and St. Petersburg, Russia, and a bit of Summerhill at the end.

SUMMERHILL VIDEO

Two videos in one: the 1990 International Alternative School Conference at Summerhill, with interviews of Summerhill students and alumni, as well as vivid footage of the Summerhill end of term celebration. Also, Summerhill's 70th anniversary celebration in August, 1991, featuring more alumni interviews, and a Summerhill democratic meeting.

NELLIE DICK AND THE MODERN SCHOOL MOVEMENT
(see review above)

A two hour interview with a 96 year old pioneer in the alternative education movement. Born in the Ukraine of Jewish anarchist parents in 1893, she started anarchist schools in England back in 1908, went to the United States in 1917 to teach at the Modern School, in New Jersey, based on the work of Francisco Ferrer, and taught at and ran Modern Schools until 1958. Herson Jim, who was a student at the Modern Schools and is now a 70 year old pediatrician is also interviewed. There are also excerpts from the Modern School reunion in 1989 which featured the Spanish Modern Schools.

THE 1990 MODERN SCHOOL REUNION

Features a 45 minute talk by Nellie Dick, at 97, and a talk by author Professor Paul Avrich, who wrote *The Modern School Movement.*

THE 1991 MODERN SCHOOL REUNION

Features a slide show/talk by Edgar Taffel, a Modern School alumni who apprenticed with Frank Lloyd Wright, and wrote a book about his work. Also, a talk by octogenarian Zack Shaw, a former Modern School student and teacher, who now teaches at Peninsula School, in California.

TWO WPIX TV SHOWS ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING AND ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

In the first, Jerry Mintz introduces alternatives in the tri-state area, with on site visitation of the Long Island Homeschoolers, and Manhattan Country School. In the second, Jerry and two homeschoolers are grilled by WPIX interviewer in the studio. One homeschooler started because her son had cancer, and the schools refused to teach him. She homeschooled, and when he was cured, returned to find he had passed his class. If you want, we'll add a five minute interview with 12 year old Jenifer Goldman on Cable 12, in which she discusses her book.

THE NATIONAL ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL DIRECTORY

A list and description of hundreds of alternative schools, in the United States and other countries, as well as homeschool resources, alternative boarding schools and colleges, etc. **$15**
(For NYS Directory, reserve now)

DEMOCRATIC MEETINGS

A two hour audio tape of demonstrations of various democratic meetings, including one at Summerhill, a meeting of Russian students at the New Schools Festival in the Crimea (translated into English), a demonstration meeting with Long Island homeschoolers, age 4-13, a meeting setting up a democratic system for an 'at risk' public high school alternative, and a democratic meeting at a public 'choice' high school.

CROP CIRCLES

A 25 minute audio tape of a close-up inspection of one of the mysterious 'crop circles' or 'corn circles' which we encountered in England, after our visit to Summerhill. Includes fascinating interviews with the farmers who own the land. **$15**

CODE CRASH

For quickly learning the Morse Code.This is a tape we made at a homeschool learning center with an 11 year old homeschooler, learning the Morse code by our unique method, in less than 20 minutes, People interested in getting their amateur radio license will be amazed. **$20**

BACK ISSUES of AERO-GRAMME: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

HOMESCHOOL RESOURCE CENTERS

A video of a homeschool resource center, featuring the Snakefoot Education Center, at Common Ground Community. This is a group of families that created a center in which 15 homeschooled children meet three times aweek. They also hired a resource person. **$20**

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In her seventy-three years, Mary Leue, mother of five and grandmother of eleven, has been a Maine farmer, registered nurse, teacher, civil rights and anti-war activist, lay midwife, leader in both alternative education and natural childbirth movements, therapist, community organizer, editor, writer, desktop publisher, and bookseller. She has published a number of articles in national and international journals of education and psychotherapy, including the *Journal of Orgonomy*, *Energy and Character*, *Holistic Education Review*, and *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, the alternative education journal that she created nine years ago.

Born and raised in New England, Mary graduated with an A.B. in history from Bryn Mawr College in 1940. In 1943, she received her graduate nursing degree from The Children's Medical Center Hospital School of Nursing in Boston, Mass. In the early 1950's, she accompanied her husband, then a young professor of philosophy, to Denton, Texas, where she raised five children, taught school and did graduate work in English literature and education at Texas Woman's University. Mary moved to Albany in the early 1960's and began training with several internationally known therapists, in addition to doing graduate work in psychology at the State University of New York, where she is now a Fellow of the Graduate Program in the Center for Arts and Humanities.

Responding to the distress of her ten-year-old son, who was suffering badly in the Albany public schools, Mary decided to start The Free School, which is now one of the longest running inner city independent alternative schools in the nation. Influenced by the father of anarchism Prince Pyotr Kropotkin, by Mahatma Gandhi, and by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary firmly believed that open, democratic education should be available to the children of the poor as well as to those of the middle and upper classes. When she consulted with A.S. Neill, founder of Summerhill, about such a possibility, his response was pure Neill: "I would think myself daft to try."

In 1969, Mary proceeded to gather an entire group of "daft" individuals who are together to this day, having joined her in her vision of living and working in genuine community in a postindustrial world. Guided by Wilhelm Reich's concept of "work democracy," Mary and the others began creating a series of small-scale community institutions to both broaden the school's mission and support the health and growth of community members. She saw clearly from the start that such an experiment would need to have its own internal economy and be based on shared, peer-level leadership, and that it would depend on ongoing, emotional honesty for its long-term survival. Finally, the awareness developed in Mary and in others that a vital community needs a spiritual basis as well, and what has evolved is multifaceted, drawing from many diverse traditions.

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John Taylor Gatto has wisely predicted that real changes in our nation's schools constitute a long-term process that will not be completed in one generation. Thus, school reformers who operate out of a notion that the problems plaguing our schools can be changed by "throwing money at them," or by advocating more "humanism" in the schools—or by better child counseling and guidance—or by building new schools to replace old ones—or by improving teacher training and/or salary levels—or by better monitoring of the academic progress made by children—or better testing—or by eliminating or modifying any other existing educational deficiencies—are forgetting the old truism which reminds us that our schools are but mirrors of the society. Yes, any and all of these suggestions will help! But in the end, it comes back to the ills of the society—to the issue of "man's inhumanity to man"—out in society itself, not just in the schools.

This level of change is like the movement of a glacier. It occurs, but very, very slowly, and always during that millennial time period in which such virtually imperceptible global change is taking place, there are always individual tragedies which have been overridden, ignored, by-passed; there is human detritus left behind when the glacier of societal change moves on. While this process is occurring, we who are present and are participating can only hope and pray that at least the children with whom we ourselves have contact will be spared in some degree, and to that end, we can bend our efforts to help bring it about.

This book has such a result as its aim. It has been put together to give people who truly care about "the lives of children" a more comprehensive view of practices and ideas that work, and a glimpse of the people who enact them. It is not intended as a cure-all—but the editor hopes it may help!

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